MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL

DECEMBER 2018

ISSUE 427

$4.99

ANCIENT FILTH

JABBER

THE FUNS

GIANT PEACH

THE SHIFTERS

CHOKED UP

PINK NOISE

LIÉ

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Send interviews, articles, scene reports, photos, and ads to mrr@maximumrocknroll.com.

Call us on the phone between 10AM and 10PM PST at (415) 923-9814.

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TOP TENS

Some of our contributors' top ten (or so) things we've reviewed this month. For review consideration, send two copies of vinyl, or one copy of CD-only or demo releases to our PO Box. We review independent punk, garage, and hardcore releases—no major labels!

PETER AVERY

HEAVY MANTLE – 12"
THE GENTLE ART OF CHOKIN' / WEAK TIES – split EP
BODY PRESSURE – US Decay LP
LA TRINIDAD – 45
THE SHIFTERS – LP
NEGATIVE SCANNER – LP
MARVIN THE ROBOT – LP
CAR CITY – Connecting the Dots LP
BORZOI – A Prayer for War LP

MATT BADENHOP

PIÑEN – live
NOXEMA – live
ETERAZ – live
NUREST SANKARIT – EP
PORVENIR OSCURO – EP
MIDNITE SNAXXX – 45
NEGATIVE SCANNER – LP
ELECTRIC CHAIR – Public Apology EP
CULT MIND / MOKOSOS – split LP
PUBLIC ACID – Easy Weapons LP

HEATHER BLOTTO

VIOLENCE CREEPS – 45
ALLVARET – Skam Och Skuld LP
BB AND THE BLIPS – Shame Job LP
BODY PRESSURE – US Decay LP
CLOWN SOUNDS – Preacher Maker LP
EVENING STANDARDS – CD
VACATION – Mouth Sounds #2699 LP

MITCH CARDWELL

WOUNDED LION – live
BB AND THE BLIPS – Shame Job LP
THE SHIFTERS – LP
CONSTANT MONGREL – LP
DIE GROUP – Disease Control LP
NEGATIVE SCANNER – LP
VIOLENCE CREEPS – 45
MIDNITE SNAXXX – 45
RULER – 45
IV – EP

VICKY CASSIS

SOMERSET THROWER – LP
CHRYSANTHEMUM – live
VACATION – Mouth Sounds #2699 LP
CHOKED UP – live
NIGHT WITCH – LP
LITTERS / THREE MINUTE MOVIE – split EP
MENTIRA – live
THE UMBRELLAS – live
MIDNITE SNAXXX – 45
BB AND THE BLIPS – Shame Job LP

ROBERT COLLINS

FLAG OF DEMOCRACY – LP
REDACTED – live
ORANG ORANG – 12"
PIÑEN – live
LOS REVOLUCIONARIOS – CD & CS
V/A – O Som Do Abismo CD
SMASH YOUR FACE – CD
MARTYRDÖD – live
FLASH HOUSE – Brown Sauce CD
EÄRTHDÖGS – live

JOAN DETORO

SALIVA TRIBE – live
MENTIRA – live
SCREAMING FIST – live
PIÑEN – live / KHIIS – live
NIGHT WITCH – LP
PORVENIR OSCURO – EP
RUBBLE – LP
PUBLIC ACID – Easy Weapons LP
BODY PRESSURE – LP
TUHOOH TUOMITUT – EP

MIRANDA FISHER

NEGATIVE SCANNER – LP
THE SHIFTERS – LP
CONSTANT MONGREL – LP
MIDNITE SNAXXX – 45
IV – EP / PREDATOR – 45
DIMESACK – LP
BB AND THE BLIPS – Shame Job LP
COLOR TV – live
SALIVA TRIBE – live
WOUNDED LION – live

LAYLA GIBBON

CONSTANT MONGREL – LP
THE SHIFTERS – LP
MIDNITE SNAXXX – 45
BB AND THE BLIPS – Shame Job LP
CULT MIND / MOKOSOS – split LP
DIE GROUP – Disease Control LP
ELECTRIC CHAIR – Public Apology EP
VIOLENCE CREEPS – 45
IV – EP
ZERODENT – LP

GREG HARVESTER

THE BANANAS / RIVERSEDGE – split CS
PSYCHIC JUDGE – CS
BIG KITTY – CS
BB AND THE BLIPS – Shame Job LP
CONSTANT MONGREL – LP
DESAHUCIADOS – LP
DYON MCCRATNEY – CS
ALLVARET – Skam Och Skuld LP
FUTURE VIRGINS – Doomsday Raga LP
MIDNITE SNAXXX – 45

KENNY KAOS

THE BLANKZ – 45
VIOLENCE CREEPS – 45
CAR CITY – Connecting the Dots LP
DEE RANGERS – LP
PHONE JERKS – 45
RULER – 45
MIDNITE SNAXXX – 45
PUPPY AND THE HANDJOBS – EP
LES LULLIES – LP
IV – EP

CAROLYN KEDDY

Buying a billion records...

RAY LUJAN

ALIEN NOSEJOB – LP
BUD BRONSON & THE GOOD TIMERS – LP
CONTROL FREAKS – 45
LOUIS LINGG AND THE BOMBS – LP
MIDNITE SNAXXX – 45
NIGHT BIRDS – CD / UK SUBS – live
RUBBLE – LP / THE SHIFTERS – LP
SWINGIN' UTTERS – LP
TOMMY AND THE COMMIES – LP
VACATION – Mouth Sounds #2699 LP

FRED SCHRUNK

Knocked out...

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This is a contributor-driven magazine. We need help writing reviews, editing, doing layouts, processing mail, maintaining our archive, and more.

Wanna be a shitworker?
Write mrr@maximumrocknroll.com.

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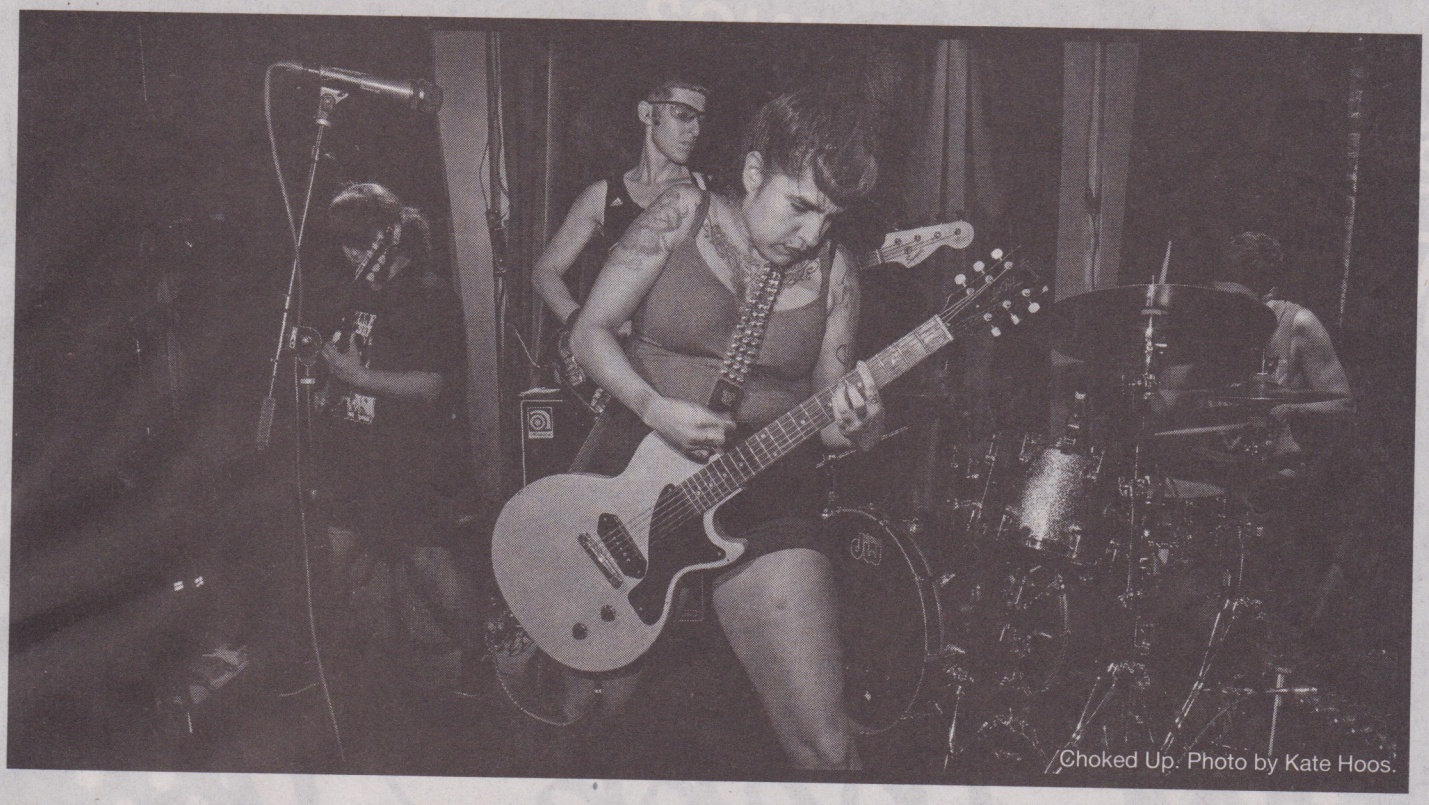

Choked Up. Photo by Kate Hoos.

ISSUE #427

With this issue, we say goodbye to Content Coordinator Joan DeToro. Joan has done so much for MRR, including coordinating the magazine alone for a few months! She'll be missed as a coordinator, but will be sticking around the magazine in a reduced capacity.

FRONT COVER: Proto Idiot photo by Lucy Ridges. Design by Jon Chamberlain.

REAR COVER: Design by Michelle Hill.

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We will not accept ads from major labels or bands with exclusive distribution through major-owned distros. Information about advertising can be found at maximumrocknroll.com/ads.

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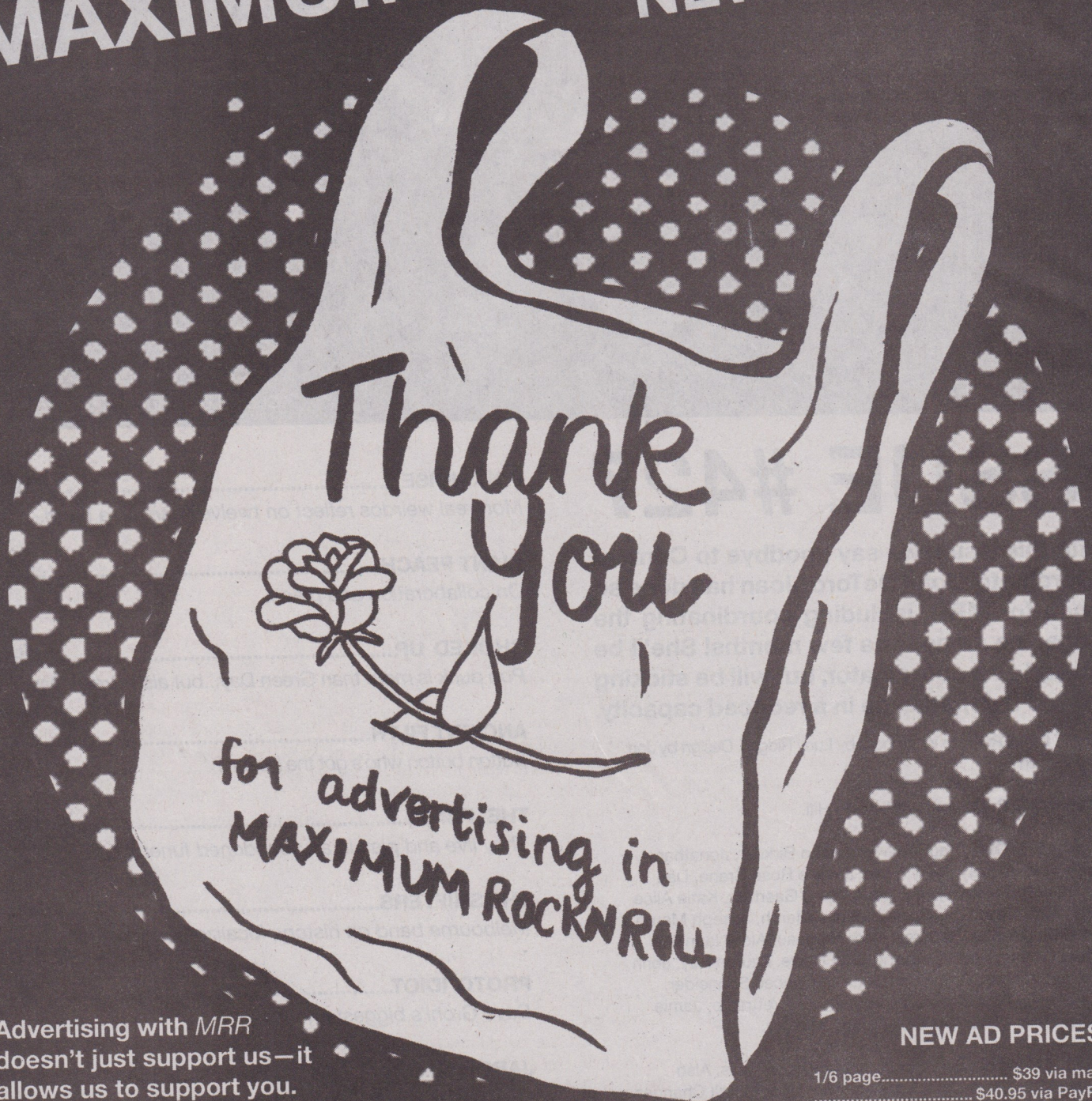

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COLUMNS

This Mold House

As I type this column up it is the eve of my 35th birthday, and is also coincidentally the third anniversary of the day I first started working on repairs to the house I would buy a few months later. The timing has me thinking a great deal about being an aging weirdo who still cares for nothing the way he cares for punk as well as the amount of progress that has been made on this house in three years.

Anyone who knows me in real life has probably heard a bit about the overwhelming undertaking I began when purchasing my house. I am hoping that the readers of *MRR* do not entirely consist of people that I am already acquainted with, and I will tell the tale as if that is the case. After years of flushing money down the toilet to pay crummy landlords money to live in their equally crummy homes, I was fed up. I began looking into the prospect of homeownership. The problem was that I had spent the better part of the past fifteen years working shit jobs just long enough to save up money then quitting to go on tour, put out a record, or whatever other life ruining punk project I was dead-set on achieving at the time. I attempted to go the traditional routes and looked into things like the First Time Homeowners Program that economically depressed cities like Buffalo, NY often offer. A meeting was set up and I arrived with what little paperwork and pay stubs I was able to scrounge up. When my credit report was ran, the woman working at the program began to laugh hysterically telling me "I have never seen anyone with such nonexistent credit. It isn't a bad score, it's just nothing. You don't exist!" The solutions she suggested to me before shooing me out of the office as quickly as possible were basically to get a credit card and a "real" job. Well, clearly that wasn't going to happen, it was time to look into more unconventional routes.

Being told that I didn't exist ended up being a bit of a blessing in disguise. Such a bonkers statement made for a pretty good story and I ended up retelling it to a number of friends. One friend ended up responding in a way which seemed like nothing more than a joke. "Oh, you want a house? I've got a house you can have." Rolling my eyes, I brushed it off only to hear another friend exclaim "no, he really does." After a long conversation that I was only about half sure I believed, I became aware of the existence of a neglected home that my friend owned deep in the east side of Buffalo. He purchased it for next to nothing about ten years prior and turned a blind eye to friends of his running a grow house out of it. After a number of years, when they caught wind of a possible raid, they removed all incriminating items from the house and disappeared, leaving the front door unlocked and not heading back so as to not implicate themselves. After the raid turned up nothing to charge anyone with, the house remained empty and vacant for a full year. One quick late-night walkthrough with my friend and I was sold. A few calls were made and the paperwork began being drawn up. A nominal $10 was exchanged for the house, and given the condition it was in, I'm not entirely sure who got the better deal.

My plan was to move into the house immediately and work on repairs while living there. If it took me 40 years to repair the house, so what? I now had the ability to shirk adult responsibilities and be on tour for months at a time without the worry of running up an ungodly amount of money owed for rent. Seeing the current state of the house made that plan seem a bit more difficult, however. The front door being left unlocked for an entire year resulted in people coming in and helping themselves to just about everything within the house. All of the copper pipes were torn out of the crawlspace and the electrical wire was snipped off the circuit breaker in the attic and sold for scrap. The same went for the shared wall furnace and baseboard heaters. Tubs, toilets, and, you hear the phrase "everything but the kitchen sink," which seems pretty accurate here until you realize that that was also ripped out of the house. In place of usable things, the house was littered with an unbelievable amount of trash and also contained the remnants from the grow house which was mostly comprised of an attic full of topsoil. This was my first task, to get rid of all the useless garbage. Working by daylight, I set to filling up 30-gallon trash bags using a snow shovel to scoop up all the refuse. Room by room I went, filling bag after bag before moving on to the top soil. When all was said and done, I had filled a total of 137 trash bags. I am well aware that it would have been cooler if I had made it to 138, since that is what we all want, but no part of this story has been embellished. That came to a total of 4,110 gallons of trash. Using similar math, which as an idiot it is possible that I miscalculated, I estimate a total of two tons of topsoil was also removed. Rather than renting a dumpster, which would have cost hundreds of times more than what I paid for the house itself, I bagged everything up and would load my van full of bags of trash every time I would leave the house and vow to find homes for them before I returned the next day. I felt incredibly justified in filling up unguarded dumpsters considering how much alleged trash I have rescued from dumpsters over the years. That wasn't enough, though. I researched the city rules regarding the limitations for trash day and figured out which parts of town had garbage day on which specific days. It seems in the city of Buffalo that every week houses are allowed to fill their garbage cans with up to 110 lbs of trash and are also allowed disposal of two additional items per household. There was my loophole. The Trash Fairy had come to our quaint little town and every week while you rested he would fill your can and add two additional bags of garbage to be retrieved before you awoke.

After about a month of diligent work like this I was able to move into the house. There was still no water, no electricity, no heat source, but the prospect of saving money drove me ever forward. I would cross those bridges when I got to them. Did I mention that I knew absolutely nothing about home repair? Oh, 'cause I didn't know a damn thing. I had done professional house painting before, but that's the closest thing to construction I had ever done, and even though this house badly needed a paint job, I was nowhere near ready for cosmetic repairs. Having some wonderful and very intelligent friends in my life, I have learned a lot over the past few years and am at the point that I am kind of an electrician, kind

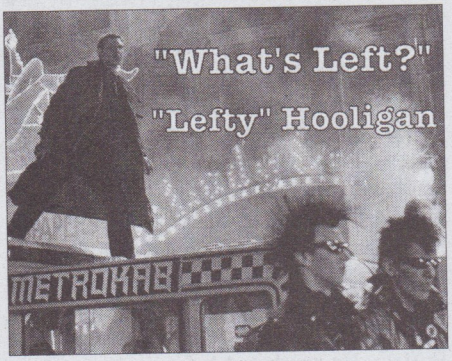
COLUMNS

of a plumber, kind of a roofer, even kind of a blaster carpenter. I look back on the amount of work I have done and am sometimes pretty impressed, then I realize how much more still needs to be done and that I have a long, long way to go before the house would be considered livable by any normal human being. I have discovered that everything is easy if you do a little research and scrounge up supplies. So many things are being repaired with supplies that would have ended up in the trash otherwise. I think the yuppies call that upcycling, but I like to call things the way they are.

With my living expenses being next to nothing and the number of projects ahead of me being through the leaky roof above my head, I found that I rarely had any reason or desire to leave my house. That has been the case for the entirety of the three years I have been working on this. It has become a huge part of my identity. When I'm in town my time is monopolized by home repair, leaving little for friends and activities. You want to really see who your friends are, buy a $10 house off the beaten path of the hip areas of your city and see who still makes the effort to see you. This got me to thinking about how when I was younger I was always incredibly intrigued by the old weirdo types who were still involved on the fringes of punk. Buffalo was once riddled with these people. There were lunatics like Mr. Ski Mask, who ran a recording studio and public access TV show all out of his dingy little basement who was able to be found, but for years I had heard tell of some Buffalo loon who was obsessed with straight-up grindcore to the point that he allegedly ran a radio show and put together a zine and blog all about modern bands, but wouldn't leave his house to go see them when they would play in town. There was someone in the late '90s who put together a zine entitled *GG Allin Is Alive And Well In Buffalo, NY* which was just photos of him dressed up as GG taken in different notable Buffalo locations. Who were these strange people and what was driving them to keep doing these interesting and bizarre projects but intentionally keeping themselves out of the public eye? Have I become one of them? Are there younger punks in town now talking about the crazy weirdo who runs his record label out of a dilapidated home on the east side? I think at this point in my life I have managed to avoid becoming that much of a recluse only through the amount that I am on the road driving tours. If that were to decrease, though, who knows, the rumors may start to fly about the aging punk pretending he knows anything about the home repair he spends most of his time working on, and the strange musical projects he works on from within his mansion of trash.

Be sure to check out future potential installments of "This Mold House," where our self-proclaimed experts will vaguely teach you things like "Anything can be a temporary roof shingle," "How to drywall turning your walls into the equivalence of crust patch pants," and "Stolen railroad tie fencing."

—Biff Bifaro



Everybody I know is pissed that I'm not more pissed off about that horrible, horrible man Donald Trump. That I seem pretty sanguine about the hurricane of political, social, and human destruction Trump and the GOP have wrought in such a short period of time or the damage they will continue to inflict for decades to come through, for instance, the Supreme Court nomination of Brett Kavanaugh. So why am I not more freaked out about Trump?

The answer is that, in my lifetime, I've seen this nation's relatively liberal politics go consistently downhill and rightward to the present. I first became aware of American politics writ large when I was eight years old, when John F. Kennedy won the presidency in 1960. My parents had been Democrats and Adlai Stevenson supporters, so my frame of reference started from a liberal "Golden Age," the "one brief shining moment" that was the myth of JFK and Camelot. But unlike many people who believe the 58 years that followed have witnessed ups and downs, good times and bad, pendulum swings left and right, and are therefore upset, desperate, and obsessed with the rise of Trump, I see those years all of a piece, a steady right wing devolution as we go straight to hell in a handbasket.

The relatively lean, muscular structure of the American state prior to 1929 permitted the nation to create an empire—by conquering the native populations, expanding its rule from coast to coast under Manifest Destiny, and asserting its power across the western hemisphere under the Monroe Doctrine. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, in confronting the challenges first of the Great Depression and then the Second World War, radically transformed American government in riding a wave of socialist / communist militancy. FDR crafted the modern warfare / welfare / corporatist state that attempted to democratically sidestep the excesses of Soviet Communism and European Fascism while outflanking the Old Left's upsurge domestically. Considered the height of American Liberalism, the New Deal has been disingenuously celebrated by that same Old Left even after a smooth political transition to the rabid anti-communism of the Eisenhower era. The guns-and-butter Kennedy / Johnson years continued the anti-communist military intervention and domestic social welfare expansion permitted by First World economic affluence, as New Left* activism and organizing surged. It must be remembered that Nixon arguably was the last liberal president.

These two prolonged separate Leftist periods were when progressive coalitions mobilized to move the Democratic party and American politics dramatically to the left. Four briefer, distinct occasions when ultra-conservative coalitions mobilized to purposefully move the Republican party and American politics profoundly to the right need also be noted: McCarthyism and the era of "Father Knows Best" morality; the prefiguring Goldwater presidential campaign; the rise of the New Right presaging Reagan's presidential bid in a new age of austerity; and the Tea Party movement that anticipated the rise of Donald Trump and independent Trumpism. Yet Democratic party governance after 1975 was not a reversal or even a holding pattern so much as a more gradual rightward descent: Carter with economic deregulation and Cold War escalation; Clinton in slashing welfare and promoting free trade; and Obama as the drone-bombing-deporter-in-chief and TPP champion.

I've summarized this country's inexorable political slide to the right over the last half century. The changeover from Keynesian affluence to neoliberal austerity, however, hints at something more fundamental underlying American politics, whether you see those politics as a swinging pendulum or, like me, as a steady flush down the porcelain highway. American capitalism made the switch from making profits out of industrial productivity to financial speculation somewhere around 1975, accounting for both the decline of the '60s New Leftist surge and the defeat of the '70s labor upsurge. In commercial capitalism, profit is extracted almost exclusively from circulation, from trade, from the buying and selling of commodities. Under industrial capitalism profit is extracted not just from circulation but also from the labor process in which factory workers are paid less than the value they produce from their labor—from surplus value. Surplus value is then used to

construct more factories and to hire more workers for wages in an ever-expanding cycle of profit-making.

But capitalism suffers from a tendency for the rate of profit to fall (in the interpretation of Marx I favor), which not only results in the boom-and-bust economic cycle we're all familiar with but also in an increasing inability to sustain industrial production. In my lifetime we've seen industrial production become so unprofitable that US industrial labor has been outsourced and factories moved to the Third World, resulting in America's overall deindustrialization and conversion to a service economy. More and more, capitalism in the US is based on extracting profit from financial transactions and speculation, a far less profitable form of capitalism then even the trade in commodities of commercial capitalism. Capitalism worldwide also suffers from the same declining rate of profit, meaning that in China, Vietnam, and other Third World nations industrial production is contracting, meaning that industrial capitalism is slumping internationally and being replaced by finance capitalism. Finance capitalism is not merely a capitalism in decline, it is capitalism heading for the mother of all crises.

Some students of the 1929 Great Depression have contended that, in liberal democracies, deep economic depressions as suffered by the interwar US are conducive to the growth of socialist movements whereas runaway inflations as experienced by Weimar Germany are favorable to the rise of fascist movements. During depressions, people who have no money or work are screwed but for those who do, money has value, work has meaning, and society has integrity, giving the edge to socialism which values labor. During inflations, it doesn't matter whether people have money or work because money has no value, work has no meaning, and society is crumbling, giving the advantage to fascism which values power.

A similar dynamic can be seen in the transition from industrial capitalism to finance capitalism in liberal democracies. In industrial capitalist societies, work and capital are intrinsically productive and so leftist movements and ideologies are widespread. Government spending and services grow, welfare programs and economic regulation expand, and the public realm and labor unions are endorsed. In finance capitalist societies, work and capital are mostly unproductive and so rightist movements and ideologies are prevalent. The economy is deregulated and financialized, the welfare state is rolled back, labor unions are crushed, the public realm is privatized, and government spending and services are cut back. About all they have in common is an aggressive, interventionist foreign policy. Marxists consider industrial capitalism in terms of constant vs variable capital while consigning finance capitalism to the category of fictitious capital.

Whether Keynesian or neoliberal, democratic or authoritarian, the state serves as the monopoly of legitimate violence, the bulwark for the existing social order, and the lynchpin for the nation and economy. The state functions the same whether under affluent industrial capitalism or austere finance capitalism, so why does society exhibit leftist unrest in the former and rightist agitation in the latter? A staid principle developed in the 1950s was that of the revolution of rising expectations in which "rising expectations embodied the twentieth century's 'real' revolution insofar as it represented for the vast majority of the world's population a break from centuries of stagnation, fatalism, and exploitation." The growing affluence from 1945 to 1975 caused expectations to rise in the population at large all over the world, which in turn led to civil unrest, insurgencies, and revolutions according to the theory. But did persistent austerity after 1975 cause the opposite: widespread social reaction, stagnation, and obedience? The results are dubious either way the theory cuts. The inconclusive empirical evidence, methodological constraints, and conceptual criticisms of the whole revolution of rising expectations thesis makes it useless.

I'm of the Marxist mindset that the social superstructure follows the economic base much as form follows function in the principle enunciated by modernist architecture and industrial design. It also means, in a Gramscian sense, that social superstructure can gain autonomy to act back on the economic base, but the starting point is crucial. We make our own history, but we don't make it as we please; we don't make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past.

I just sneaked in another Marx quote.

**New Left in this case does not refer to the politics that grew up around organizations like Students for a Democratic Society but to Leftist organizing and movements that flourished from the Civil Rights movement beginning in 1955 to the collapse of the anti-Vietnam war movement in 1975.*

SIGNIFICANT DATE RANGES: Old Left: 1930–50; New Left: 1955–75; Keynesian industrial affluence: 1945–75; neoliberal finance austerity: 1975 onward; McCarthyism / Eisenhower era: 1950–1960; Goldwater campaign: 1963–64; New Right: 1980–88; Tea Party / independent Trumpism: 2009 onward.

PERSONAL PROPAGANDA:
You can download free EPUB, MOBI, PDF, and DOCX files of my latest cyberpunk mystery story "The Death of David Pickett" at 62milepress.com/the-death-of-david-pickett. To find links to my blogs, websites, Facebook, and Instagram, visit my social media aggregator at gamatiasz.com. You can purchase copies of my near-future science fiction thriller "1% Free" through either site.

The early days of punk, especially in the UK, have been examined by rock journalists and cultural studies types down to the finest details. However, very little attention has been paid to the early days of hardcore. Hardcore exploded in 1981 and spread rapidly to all corners of the globe. The first wave of hardcore peaked in '83 and '84 then begin to branch off in many different directions after that. Bob Rue of RED MEAT once told me that "1981 was for hardcore what 1977 was for punk." There were certainly punk bands before 1977 laying the groundwork, but it was only in '77 that things really exploded and spread around the world. So let's get in the way back machine and take a look at the earliest days of hardcore before 1981.

There is much debate over what was the first hardcore record. And let me be clear I'm only going to talk about records here. Not live gigs or demos. Many bands lay claim to being the first hardcore band, Tokyo's SS or New York City's NIHILISTICS for example. However, none of them released vinyl until after other bands had put out hardcore records. As far as I am concerned, hardcore on vinyl begins in just one place, and that is the MIDDLE CLASS *Out of Vogue* 7". This record is the clear cut off between just fast punk which preceded it and real hardcore which followed it. In terms of speed, intensity, and song structure, this record stands far apart from any other released in 1978. I think it is fascinating, but it would seem the influences here come more from bands like WIRE or GANG OF FOUR rather than from the CLASH or the SEX PISTOLS. Or for that matter other harder-edged music like metal or hard rock. Indeed, I think we see that WIRE's stripped-down minimalist attack is a bigger influence on early hardcore than many of us care to admit now. Perhaps

COLUMNS

WIRE's "less is more" aesthetic appealed to those young people who saw the first wave of punk beginning to adopt the same pompous rock star traits they had initially rebelled against just three years earlier.

Let's consider the first handful of real hardcore records to gain some exposure and notoriety in roughly chronological order:
MIDDLE CLASS *Out of Vogue* (1978)
BLACK FLAG *Nervous Breakdown* (1979)
BAD BRAINS *Pay to Cum!* (1980)
DEAD KENNEDYS *California Über Alles* (1980)
TEEN IDLES *Minor Disturbance* (1980)
DISCHARGE *Fight Back* and *Decontrol* (1980)
TERVEET KÄDET *Rock Laahausta Vastaan* (1980)
BRÜLBÅJZ Dödens Apostlar (1980)

I would invite readers to make their case for other records, but I am inclined only to include bands who started to play hardcore, not punk bands who sped up. A lot of people have described Houston's the HATES as hardcore, but their "No Talk in the '80s" sounds like KBD punk to me, and on the cover they are dressed pretty New Wave. BRÜLBÅJZ gets lumped in with KBD Svensk Punk, but if you listen to "EAP" it's hard to describe as anything other than hardcore punk.

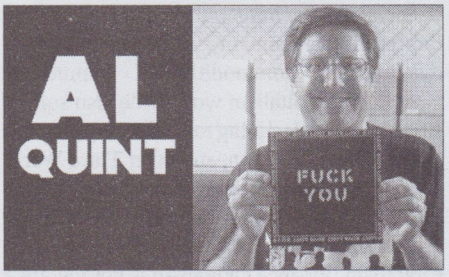
To this list we might add the GERMS and RHINO 39, but I feel like most people consider those punk bands. Before we delve deep into this discussion, let's make an observation. Hardcore exploded in 1981, that was fully three years after MIDDLE CLASS. This ball got rolling fairly slowly, compared to the pace at which it was moving by 1981. Second, as Stuart Schrader has observed, the move to hardcore was not necessarily all the result of bands copying MIDDLE CLASS. TERVEET KÄDET, BRÜLBÅJZ, SS, and even BAD BRAINS may never have heard, or even heard of MIDDLE CLASS, however, they arrived at the same point. This suggests that hardcore was basically inevitable once punk started selling out. That is to say, as soon as speed, energy, and a do it yourself ethic were introduced to bored young people, many would naturally arrive at hardcore from the same starting point.

Next, I think it's quite illustrative to listen to all of these records back to back and try to divorce yourself from the current context and put yourself into 1978–79 when there was no hardcore. There were punk bands, of course, some already playing very fast, and the door was wide open, but so far no one had pushed through. That is to say, there were no peers and certainly not 30-plus years of hardcore built on top of it yet. Also, recognize that although these records all represent a break with the past, and something new called hardcore, they don't exactly all sound alike either. DEAD KENNEDYS' and BLACK FLAG's music would not be so alien to CHUCK BERRY or DICK DALE, just much faster and more aggressive. Indeed, hardcore as a *movement* got national exposure mostly from these two bands. In this regard, hardcore attitude outweighed the more traditional rock influence in the music.

Which leads us to the more pure hardcore bands on this list, DISCHARGE, TEEN IDLES, BAD BRAINS, and TERVEET KÄDET. These bands had speed and power and were doing something totally new right out of the gate. I would note, however, BAD BRAINS had much rock / reggae influence, and the flip of the groundbreaking "Pay to Cum" is in fact a radio ready pop ditty, "Stay Close to Me," which only serves to highlight the duality of this talented band. If we dig deeper into the explosion of the hardcore movement, while DEAD KENNEDYS and BLACK FLAG were the most successful and had the most exposure. It was probably DISCHARGE and the BAD BRAINS who had the most significant and deeply felt influence. TEEN IDLES were pretty amateurish, but the scene which they and the BAD BRAINS spearheaded became one of the most influential in terms of music and ideas, spawning hardcore, straightedge, and emo in just under a decade. DISCHARGE of course continue to influence many bands and the punk aesthetic to this day. When hardcore blew up in 1981, a huge number of the most important bands were taking their cues either from TEEN IDLES, BAD BRAINS, or DISCHARGE.

TERVEET KÄDET and BRÜLBÅJZ, while very cool, are in the same league as MIDDLE CLASS, that is to say known mostly in their local scene and by record collectors. TERVEET KÄDET got some international exposure later, especially through comp appearances, but you would have been hard pressed finding many people in 1980 who had heard them. That said, that a band would arrive at a raw hardcore sound in such comparative isolation (Tornio Finland, look on the map) is further proof of Stuart's theory that bands would naturally arrive at the same hardcore sound once punk started.

MIDDLE CLASS started playing fast and stripped down punk in 1978, certainly BLACK FLAG and TEEN IDLES were aware of them and their sound, but it's not certain that TERVEET KÄDET or BRÜLBÅJZ had heard them. Still, it's somewhat fascinating that it took another several years for the tremors to reverberate before hardcore really took over in 1981. I think BLACK FLAG's and DEAD KENNEDYS' frequent gigs and early tours as well as good record distribution did a lot to push things in 1980, with DISCHARGE playing the same role in Europe. The rest of these records were fairly obscure. BAD BRAINS had a great reputation from their live gigs, but only a few hundred copies of *Pay to Cum* were pressed. Contrast this with the tens of thousands of copies of *Nervous Breakdown* or *California Über Alles*. I will leave you with one last thought: you could rewrite this article about grind and death metal, just substituting 1986 for 1978, REPULSION for MIDDLE CLASS or BAD BRAINS, and DEATH or MASTER for BLACK FLAG, etc. Then in 1989 things totally exploded, about the same lag time and process as the early days of hardcore.



HAVE A BEER WITH FEAR...BUT IT'LL COST YOU

So those "punk legends" FEAR came through here a few months ago and I learned that they were offering a VIP package for $125. This included a ticket to the show, a t-shirt, a pin, and a chance to "meet and greet" the band. According to an acquaintance of mine, sixteen people purchased it and I think I heard the price was knocked down to a more reasonable $100. I'm not sure if it included a personalized insult session from Lee Ving.

I know the VIP music package has been a thing for awhile, and you'd expect it from mainstream artists, but so-called punk artists (although using the term for them is stretching things a bit these days) have got into the racket, er, game as well. There are VIP experiences for HENRY ROLLINS, MISFITS, the DAMNED and FACE TO FACE. For the latter, I think they were doing a package that included an intimate acoustic performance. If I'd gone, I would have brought my copy of the VICTORIA MANOR demo for their vocalist Trever Keith to sign. That was the bargain-basement QUEENSRŸCHE-style band Trever was in, along with another founding FACE TO FACE member, before they jumped on the pop punk bandwagon. Even when I liked that band (and I still like some of the early songs), it didn't stop me from heckling them by requesting VICTORIA MANOR at one of their shows. I don't think Trever was amused.

SOCIAL DISTORTION have quite the VIP deal this year For a mere $175, you get one general admission ticket, access to a pre-show

party (cash bar, though), a SOCIAL D pennant flag, trucker hat, enamel pin set, "Skelly" key chain, and cinche bag (what's a cinche bag?), plus a commemorative VIP laminate and crowd-free merch shopping!

Unfortunately, it doesn't sound like you got to meet the band. I think the only the way that happens is if you're a diehard Trump supporter and get upset about Mike Ness calling your Dear Leader a racist. You yell *"I paid for your music, not your politics"* and flip him off and he tells you to come closer, spits on you, and then comes into the crowd to punch you. That really happened at a recent SOCIAL D show in Sacramento. I suppose that's one way to meet him up close and personal without having to buy the VIP package. It was funny seeing people talk about how that was such a "punk rock" thing to do, when SOCIAL D haven't been remotely punk rock in decades. Also, I think this Trump fan kind of misunderstands what punk means. Well, it means different things to different people, but I've always looked at it as anti-authoritarian, against racism, homophobia and transphobia, xenophobia, misogyny, nationalism and so on. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe nothing says punk like supporting those sorts of ideologies. After all, Punk Legend Ving has long spouted right-wing political views.

The recent Punk Rock Bowling Fest in Las Vegas had its Very Important Punk package that include a club show pre-access sale code, a t-shirt, a PRB 20th anniversary coffee table book, separate VIP entrance, two level viewing section with shade and seating that's closer to the stage, water misters, private VIP bars, and bathrooms with AC. Plus three "free" drinks per day. Because nothing says punk like paying extra to separate yourself from the less-affluent punters. Punk as *fuck*!

The fest's website touts that its creators, Mark and Shawn Stern from YOUTH BRIGADE and BYO Records, *"are dedicated to the ideals of individuality, thinking for yourself, being a force for change and standing up against authoritarian, fascist, sexist, racist, anti-semitic, homophobic and other forms of oppression in culture, government, businesses and institutions. Mark and Shawn have been doing this for more than 40 years of their lives and hope to continue as long as people believe that we can all affect change for the better through what we do."* That's very noble and idealistic. I agree with that completely. I stated that a few paragraphs back. But for all this anti-authoritarian talk, there are rules to be followed, the same sort of rules that big-time rock events have: no cameras, no backpacks, no chains, no outside food or beverages, no ins and outs and so on. Once again, Punk as *fuck*! I personally get annoyed when I go to even a club show and can't bring in a bag or get frisked like a criminal and have to watch the band behind some barricade with a line of security personnel who look like the New England Patriots' front line. Thankfully, I only go to a handful of shows like that a year.

I had a rather spirited discussion about this on my social media page. There were a few people who actually defended these practices. One guy I know, who's a music journalist and generally just covers bigger shows and artists (that is, he's not the kind of guy you'd see at a DIY show) said *"VIPs are a good way to help a band touring on that level when those tours get cash-light along the way, especially when there are gaps and extended travel between dates. Since it's unpunk to actually buy records these days, these bands need to do something. Travel is expensive, and the FEAR guys aren't exactly teenagers."*

It's accurate to say that we travel in different musical circles and exist in parallel punk universes. Another guy I know from the hardcore scene from "back in the day" was lauding these arrangements by stating that some people's willingness to pay more for that kind of access or those types of amenities helps keep down the prices for those who don't want to pay for it. Of course, in my view, that runs counter to any sort of punk "egalitarianism." It runs counter to my own set of ethics, and I have no interest in supporting any of that. If people want to pay for that access and delude themselves into thinking they're engaging with anything remotely punk, fine, have a blast. I know plenty of bands who tour and have members who aren't exactly teenagers. We've had bands stay with us who have members in their 40s and 50s. They're doing it because they love it, not as any sort of cash grab.

Another acquaintance of mine, who also has roots in the '80s-era hardcore scene and has played in a few popular indie rock bands over the years, told me he charges $100 for dinner with him on his solo tours and that *"generally the people who do it have wayyy better jobs than I do and I fucking appreciate it like nobody's biz... also, very few people do it (in my case for [obvious] reasons). When it was proposed to me that I charge extra for having a dinner with me, my hardcore Spidey senses went off 'sell out, sell out' but when I agreed to do it, ironically, a disproportionate amount of the takers were hardcore fans who wanted to talk about the old days and it was a blast."*

Well, more power to this guy. Damn, I'm missing out here. I'd work cheaper than that. If you take me out for dinner at a restaurant of my choice, I wouldn't charge extra to regale you with all the old-timer stories you'd ever want to hear. Even a morning run at Dunkin Donuts would suffice. I could also set up VIP packages for my radio show. If you give me $25, I'll let you play a set of the music of your choice. For $250, you can do the whole show. But there are surcharges—add on $200 if you play any JACK WHITE project, $500 if you play any ARCADE FIRE or MY MORNING JACKET, $1000 if you play any COLDPLAY and $2000 if you play any KANYE WEST. I'll even throw in a custom KANYE MAGA hat. What a bargain, eh?

DEMO-LITION TIME...

I've got a bunch of demo releases to catch up on. The UNCOMMITTED's self-titled demo features thrashy hardcore with super-gruff vocals and a pedal steel guitar to go along with the more traditional electric six string. In addition to their five original tracks, there's an updated version of the FUGS' (via SUN CITY GIRLS) "CIA Man," retitled as "See Aye." A wild 'n' wooly hardcore hoedown. (uncommitted.bandcamp.com)

SICK BURN includes 3/4 of Sacramento ragers RAD (different guitarist), and, to borrow one of the song titles, it's a demonstration of the joy of thrashing. Loud-fast slam-bang hardcore punk destined to get everyone into a frenzy. "O.P.I.G." ("Old Punks Is Grumpies") is about old punks talking about the good ol' days while putting down people keeping things alive. All I have to say is #NotAllOldPunks! See you in the pit. (sickburn.bandcamp.com)

Next, we have tapes from two North Carolina bands. VITTNA have released a teaser for their upcoming 7" EP on Bunker Punks: two of the EP songs, plus three live songs, one of which is a cover of SACRILEGE's "Dig Your Own Grave." Scalding vocals and a rampaging attack that also adds some textured tones in the guitar playing. The live tracks are rough but don't sound like they were recorded on a boombox. Jeff from VITTNA also plays in SCARECROW and Daniel from Sorry State is their bass player. Straight-up Swedish-style hardcore driven by thumping drumming and full-bore guitar crunch / sizzle, with vocals buried a bit in the mix. No surprises, just blaze. (bunkerpunks.bandcamp.com)

BARRICADED SUSPECTS mix up driving hardcore with edgier elements on their latest demo, *Enough*. There's the nervy burn of "Usurp" and the jarring "You've Got A Beard," as well as the mid-tempo thump of "Pyramid" deviating from the thrash formula. High energy material. (barricadedsuspects.bandcamp.com)

The two most recent releases from More Power Tapes are by SCIENCE MAN and CYBER BULLIES. SCIENCE MAN is a solo project masterminded by John Toohill from ALPHA HOPPER, RADIATION RISKS, and JOHNS, and the insert says it was recorded

mostly inside a moving van. That's a tour van, not one you use to move furniture, and it was moving. I hope he wasn't driving, too. Bashing synth and guitar-driven compositions with an angry edge, a bit along the lines of DESTRUCTION UNIT. There's nothing quirky-cute or mechanized-sounding about it. This comes from a darker impulse. "Science Monster," in particular, is plenty skull-smashing. The one exception is the semi-ambient instrumental "Airport Underground," which won't be mistaken for ENO's *Music For Airports* anytime soon. John's put together a live incarnation and apparently does science experiments while they play. Science gone too far? Let's hope so.

Biff and Nicky from RADIATION RISKS moonlight in CYBER BULLIES, and their *Leather and Lazers* demo is a wise-assed, snot-nosed, '80s keyboard-laced new wave / garage / punk throwback full of manic energy. These ain't DEVO clones—if anything, it's probably closer to DOW JONES & THE INDUSTRIALS' wilder moments. Funny '80s-oriented lyrics about Gorbachev and the Reagan assassination attempt written by people who were born in the '80s, not the mid to late '60s, as they claim on the opening song. (morepowertapes.bandcamp.com)

A few years ago, More Power released a pretty good demo by the Hattiesburg, MS band BIG BLEACH. There's been a merger of member(s) of that band and another Hattiesburg band BAGHEAD for JUDY AND THE JERKS, who have just released their fourth tape, *Roll On Summer Holidays*. Fun, spirited hardcore punk with a rambunctious attitude and sharp musicianship. That comes out for the bass and guitar runs on "Dog." "Goblin Reprise" is the tour-de-force, starting with a lumbering bass / drums / feedback tandem that sounds a lot like GANG GREEN's "Selfish," and, along the way, Judy gives a narrative about one day killing all the people making her life miserable, especially at work. There's a noisy free-form freakout in the middle of the song before settling back into the main riff. A total blast. (judyandthejerks.bandcamp.com)

Chicago band SLAUGHTER RULE's *modus operandi* is raw and angry hardcore whose intent is expressed rather succinctly with "Kill Him," ending with what sounds like a power tool coming to a stop. It comes from the same dark realm that a band like HOAX populated, especially for "Never Better" and the opening duo of tracks, "The Dream / What's Real." The distorted vocals just add to the menacing ambiance. (slaughterrule.bandcamp.com)

LAWMAN's *On Patrol* demo provides some mean 'n' ornery punk / rock'n'roll. Dave Shay (ex-FAST DEATH and PURGATORY) belts out the words with a tonsil-shredding growl and the band exhibits solid high-powered chops. Two mid-tempo crushers, as well as the Motörcharged fury of "Manslaughter." Bare-knuckled pillage. (JR03867@gmail.com).

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CORRECTION: in my last column about MC50, I said there was a video that I couldn't bear to watch of them covering the BEATLES' "Come Together." It was actually an MC5 song. I still didn't watch it.

"Rock'n'roll is a teenage sport, meant to be played by teenagers of all ages—they could be 15, 25, or 35. It all boils down to whether they've got the love in their hearts, that beautiful teenage spirit..."
—Calvin Johnson"

Most histories of punk will tell you something along the lines of "the RAMONES started it in the '70s and everything was chill, then *bam!* BLACK FLAG and hardcore and violence came along and some people liked it and some people didn't. Then SST stopped and Sub Pop started and punk bands started making songs the general public could stand. The radio started playing *Nevermind* and *Dookie* and punk was done." Most of you reading this probably don't think that last part is true, since you're holding a magazine full of great new bands, but you probably haven't thought to much about how being a teenager that's into punk has changed since you were reading *MRR* behind the bleachers in your high school PE class twenty years ago.

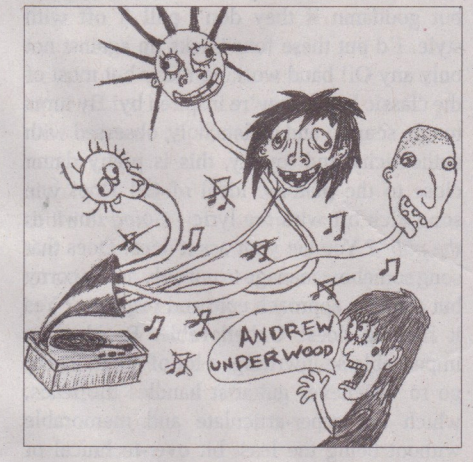
It's well known that punk isn't the secret network of friends that it used to be, or at least that people's memories and accounts of the scene make it appear to have been. However, most people who have been around forever don't have firsthand experience with the ways in which punk has changed for young people in the past 25 years. (That doesn't stop some of you guys from complaining and saying kids these days have it easy. Don't worry, we sort of forgive you.) If someone wants to get into punk, they're just one Google search away. Overall, I think that's a beautiful thing. I got Spotify when I was about eleven years old. I'd already been into music since I discovered the RAMONES six years before, but it was starting to become a bigger part of my identity. All of a sudden I had more to listen to than my dad's CDs. If I got a musical recommendation from some cool grown-up, then I could hear that band for free as soon as I got home from school. The crucial part of this equation is that I was still young enough that worrying about whether my music taste made me seem cool never even crossed my mind. When I heard a new song, the only thing that influenced my opinion was whether it scared me the way SLEATER-KINNEY'S dueling guitars did on "One More Hour," awed me like BIKINI KILL's "Rebel Girl" or made me feel a sense of belonging to some unknown yet familiar "others" like the RAMONES and the REPLACEMENTS had been doing for practically my whole life. Rock'n'roll bands scared, awed and welcomed me more than the music that my friends talked about ever did.

Through middle school, punk started gradually becoming a bigger part of my life. By eighth grade, I had developed a love for DIY and had begun trying to figure out a way I could contribute. I also started to realize that I was pretty much the only person my age I knew who not only liked punk, but wanted to be a part of the scene, and maybe even devote my life to it. The other kids at school thought it was kind of cool that I played the drums, but even the ones who played an instrument or had some interest in rock'n'roll didn't play in bands, read zines or go to shows. Even the kids I played music with didn't dedicate much time and effort to our bands. They were happy to let adults book them their few shows a year and leave it at that. This isn't to say they weren't out there, but despite punk's increased popularity, the punks can still be hard to find. I'm also not saying you need to put everything you have into music in order to be a "real" fan, but I want to do more than play a few covers and play at those Kids Rock Fun! type of things where people's moms carry their guitars and their dads talk to you like you're five if you don't like the WHO. Basically, I wanted to play music all the time, I wanted to have fun, and I wanted it to be on my own terms.

For the most part, you don't get beat up or made fun of for being punk anymore, at least not in large-ish American cities. (This is different for other people, though. Get in touch, tell me what you've experienced!) In fact, it might make people think you're kind of cool and mysterious. (Note: most of my friends are at a party right now. I'm sitting in bed with my dog, listening to MARTHA

and generally being neither mysterious nor cool.) It's easier to find new music and get involved in your local scene than ever before. Still, most teens are scared to put themselves out there. I know people who create the best art and music, but they keep it confined their bedrooms. There are a number of possible reasons for this; social media, the music industry, and condescending adults make it seem like all the kids making music are "talented" and "prodigies." This takes us back to the belief that you need RockStar Genes™ to play music, which punk rock was created to fight!

My main goal for this column is get more kids to start making stuff, and to provide a place for that stuff to be seen. Punk rock isn't as hard as it looks. It's mostly just accidents anyway. I mean, I emailed *MRR* a month ago to ask if they'd ever consider doing comics and next thing I know, I'm doing a column! I'll probably be doing some pieces kind of like this one about my experiences and thoughts, but I'd also love to hear from you! I want to know what you're making, and I think other people should too, so if you or someone you know is eighteen or under and makes music / other rad punk stuff, get in touch at carmenservon@gmail.com.



Hello fellow punx, how's life treating you all? Out here we went through a period of several weeks that were unusually, almost eerily, foggy in San Francisco. Can't say I minded it at all. Dark days for dark times. Definitely appropriate for the first of this month's records, the ultra-gloomy ASOCIAL TERROR FABRICATION / INSTINCT OF SURVIVAL split LP.

So crusty you can practically see the stink lines radiating off the vinyl, these two bands (who recently also joined each other on a tour of Japan) both bring some of their best material to date. ASOCIAL TERROR FABRICATION are a mutable beast who have experimented with every musical facet of the early Brit-core phenomenon, using the Peaceville and Earache catalogues as a guidebook. From straightforward DOOM-style crust to blown-out CARCASS-ish proto grindcore to DEVIATED INSTINCT / early HELLBASTARD stench-core, ASOCIAL TERROR FABRICATION have tried it all, often with great success. Here ATF offer up three long tracks in the medium of "stench" driven by massive riff after massive riff, occasionally melodramatic low / high vocals, and a middling pace that dips at times into almost PARADISE LOST-ish dirge tempos. I've enjoyed every phase of ATF's chameleon-like musical career, but this is easily one of the best recordings they've produced to date. There are moments, like the mosh / breakdown riff that closes "Soak Into the Soil," that feel absolutely definitive, as good as anything produced by the bands they're influenced by. Despite the moderate tempos, there's a ton of energy and enthusiasm in the recording; you can feel the band straining to hold back and keep control of the pace until the final unleashed assault of the side closing "Lost Remains," which features another massive and memorable final riff. Elite-level stuff, right up there with DISTURD when it comes to Japanese bands (or really, bands worldwide) that are fucking with this style of hardcore. Germany's INSTINCT OF SURVIVAL are excellent split-mates, definitely operating out of the same playbook as ATF but with a faster and more concise approach. Very much in the vein of *Fuck Peaceville*-era DOOM, though with moments of epic crust tunefulness (COP ON FIRE came to mind repeatedly) and some killer dropped-in thrash metal solos at key moments. The drumming is a bit too metal for the style (a lot of it feels as repetitive as an IMMORTAL album) but that's a minor quibble, there's a lot to enjoy from IOS as well, especially the vocal interplay and the clever, cynical lyrics. Doomed to Extinction Records is not a particularly prolific label, but its track record is exemplary, and this is another mark in their good-to-great release ledger.

Next up is a pretty much guaranteed "best of 2018" entry, at least (and probably only if current trends are any indication) from yours truly, Blood Sucker Records' *Hard Core Punk Trucks* compilation CD. Four bands, three tracks apiece and each suite of tracks could've easily been a top-quality EP for each band. Kicking off with the band I was least interested in and most impressed by, CHEERIO! The perfect tracks to open the comp, CHEERIO lay out an incredible assault of rock-influenced, swaggering hardcore highlighted by their dual-vocalist attack (supplemented by monster gang backup vocals that occasionally take over the lead) and Fuku's playful, killer guitar leads and riffs. The fact that the band deploys a whistle as an effective instrument is a impressive as well! Every song is a highlight, but the monster party singalong "High Time & Raw Life" is the standout, so unbelievably catchy that you'll be singing along by the second chorus. These tracks are so fucking good that I need to reevaluate my opinion of this band and track down their earlier releases. Goddamn, killer stuff! While NEMESIS have been laying low since their well-received pair of EPs in 2011 and 2013, their tracks show that the band have lost nary a step in the intervening years. Deeply influenced by *Give Notice...*-era NIGHTMARE (every passing year shows more clearly how deeply important that record and band are to the Japanese hardcore scene), these songs are all go, built around the nearly unhinged shrieking vocal attack and the intricate stop-start songwriting. The recording is a bit treble-heavy for my taste, but the material more than overcomes that issue (if it's even an issue and not a choice). Sadly, they performed their final gig on October 9th, so these are likely the final recordings by a band that was never less than superb. CROSSFACE, a band who are legendary live monsters but recently have been stingy with the recorded material, come up next with their strange and practically unique take on Japanese hardcore. The riffing and songwriting are very odd, repetitive and almost looping, nearly hypnosis-inducing while still being super-aggressive and just plain mean-sounding. The addition of a female voice in the backing vocal gang is a very welcome one. Everything about this band is insular and kind of strange to an outsider, but it's undeniably fascinating and completely unlike their peers while still being recognizably of that scene. The CD is closed out by RAPPA, who should be familiar to readers of this column for their excellent side of the LIFELOCK split EP, though they also have a superb solo CD and other great compilation tracks to their credit. RAPPA are a D-beat band that mostly eschew reverb and guitar fuzz, opting for a stripped-down DISASTER-like straightforward take on the style, relying on aggression and tight songwriting instead of chaos and noise to drive their style. I've nagged y'all before about the need to pay attention to CDs coming out of Japan if nowhere else; this is proof positive that you're missing out if you're not keeping track of such things. BSR is a deeply underrated label, with a consistent ratio of hits to misses in a catalog that stretches across four decades (to be fair, the first release was in 1989, so three decades is more accurate, but still...).

COLUMNS

Being a Singaporean D-beat band, DEATHRACE are always going to be held up against the exemplary LIFELOCK. If their *War Is Not the Matter, the Matter Is You* demo is any indication, DEATHRACE will stand up well to the comparison. Whereas LIFELOCK are a more chaotic, D-CLONE / CONTRAST ATTITUDE style of post-DISCLOSE band, DEATHRACE are very much traditionalists; under the fuzz and Kawakami-influenced vocals are some very disciplined tunes that owe as much to BROKEN BONES as they do to DISCLOSE. The title track is an exemplary example of this, built as it is around a super-catchy chorus and a cool, rock-y bass hook. Catchiness aside, the whole demo, from tunes to lyrics to packaging to recording, has a very dark feeling, very grimy and oppressive as is appropriate given the war-and-suffering theme. Too many bands embrace the typical b&w "war, skulls and dead bodies" aesthetic while failing to really convey the gravity of the associated message, DEATHRACE definitely have avoided that pitfall. The understandably rocky recording errs in favor of leading with the bass, a great decision as there are some very unique and dynamic bass lines here that would usually be buried under the fuzz guitar tracks. Strong drumming is another highlight ("Joe" is a budding D-beat master, super crisp and on-point), as are the passionate, frantic guitar solos. This is an A+ demo, can't wait to hear more.

Japanese peace-punk supergroup C (featuring members of pretty much all the bands that should be your favorites, including but by no means limited to CONFUSE, D.S.B., and STAGNATION) have released their first new manifesto since 2014's *Dear Fuck'in Shit...* CD, and to nobody's surprise it's a killer. Released by Hardcore Survives and bearing the unwieldy title *Warning! Neightborhood Nuisance Session Assault For You!*, the jangling-but-angry guitars, ranting vocals and clattering military cadence of the drumming and pacing appearing on this EP should be familiar to both existing fans and fans of the Crass Records catalog. Being who they are, the members of C of course put their own stamp on the material, adding some freaked out effects to the wall of guitar sound, a uniquely Japanese idiomatic approach to the lyrics and a songwriting style that embraces both the bayonet-sharp drive of CRASS at their most angry and the tunefulness of the best of OMEGA TRIBE or the MOB, sometimes within the same song a la the standout B-side opener "The Ruthless Tune." Comparing the two, the debut is probably the the more impactful of the two recordings, if only because it was such a shock to hear a band embrace this style of punk and perform it so adroitly in the 21st century, but that is not at all to say that this is an unworthy follow-up. The band definitely lives up to the mark it set for itself earlier. If anything, I wish this were at least a 12" and not a mere four songs. I hope the next recording comes a little bit quicker!

The TITS are back! Super-quick too! Since the collapse of RECONSIDERATION in 2015, the TITS have been cranking out release after release, culminating in their new 猥褻外道 flexi, three songs of super-chaotic KURO-influenced noize punk. The recording is swampy, the guitar and bass sounds are blown-out all to fuck, and the vocals are as vicious as anything I've heard this year. Sounds so aggressive they're likely to tear right through the flimsy medium they're contained upon. Fuck, it's over so fast it's hard to offer up an opinion beyond "you have to hear this to believe it"! From the anarchic opening sample to the last chord this is completely timeless Japanese hardcore that exemplifies the unpredictability and violence that (for better or worse) characterized the best of '80s Japanese hardcore and noise (not just *Who the Helpless* but the *Jag Out / Top Less Go* flexi and even the unmitigated melody-free aggression of HANATARASH). The TITS seem hell-bent on being as obscure and insular as possible, so this release on their own T.T. label will be difficult to find but incredibly rewarding if you can track one down. The Ukiyo-e-style cover art speaks to the horror contained within; the record looks like a Blue Jug release that came out of some nightmare time machine and sounds that way too. Remarkable.

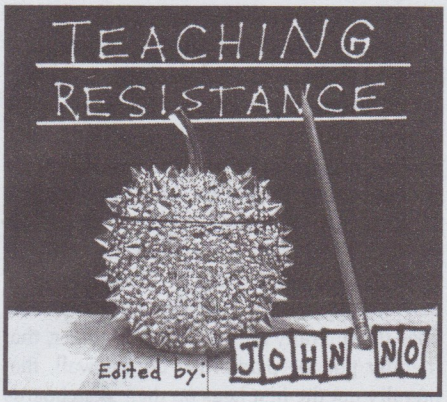
Enough of this noize and bullshit, let's talk about some great fucking punk rock for a change! Osaka's X-V.I.D.E.O. self-released their "I Don't Need It" EP and it's as perfect a slice of '77 punk rock as you'll hear this year. Three tracks, all of them sub-two minute killers. Total KBD worship, snotty vocals colliding against scratchily impeccable melodies, recalling everything from VILLAGE PISTOLS to the PROBLEMATICS to contemporaries BLACK AND WHITE. Hints of garage rock, a dose of the DAMNED, and a ton of rusty razor blades in the mix. Masterful production pairs with perfect graphic design screened onto tissue-thin paper that just highlights the immediacy and intended message of the EP. The title track is probably the one that'll end up on your next mixtape but the creepy, oddly DEAD KENNEDYS-tinged "No Wonder Fill Sick" might be the the sleeper hit. Garage / KBD / power pop fans don't read this column, but if any of you happen to be, GET THIS NOW!!!

Back in the day, certain zines used to warn you in the review section when you were getting into that issue's UNHOLY GRAVE or AGATHOCLES reviews (because there would be a nearly endless bunch of 'em). Well, today I'm implementing the Pogo 77 warning! Yeah, this column some months might as well be "Andrew reviews the latest Pogo 77 releases, plus maybe some other shit" so here you go, rabid label fans, two good ones for you! First off is the new CENTIPEDE record. They've been marinating for a minute since their sweet 2xEP and surprising reggae-tinged appearance on the *Scrap!* compilation, and in that time they seem to have gotten faster and tighter. The *Bystander* EP kicks off with the frantic, jittery title track. Carried by the crazed vocal, "Bystander" always seems to be just on the edge of total collapse, punk as absolute fuck. The B-side kicks off with "UWS," a stuttering rocker with occasional cowbell with a bit of a UK SUBS vibe. The closer, "Boredom" features the spiky angularity of the more punky WIRE or GANG OF FOUR tracks, sped up to hardcore tempo and highlighted by the simple, stupidly catchy chorus. This EP is definitely CENTIPEDE's best work yet, accentuated by the top-notch graphic design that makes this record look like a classic of the '70s.

Finally, let's consider QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS' *Tell Us the Truth* EP. It takes some mighty cojones to step up to the legacy of SHAM 69 the way Q&A so boldly have, but goddamn if they don't pull it off with style. I'd put these four tracks up against not only any Oi! band working today but most of the classic bands they're inspired by! By turns tough, soaring and melancholy, obsessed with authenticity and loyalty, this is pretty damn close to the platonic ideal of Oi! Does one song kick off with the lyric *"Going down to the pub"?* You bet your ass it does! Does that song somehow manage to not only not be corny but actually approach epic and inspiring? Yes it fucking does! Unbelievable. Besides the impeccable songwriting, a lot of credit has to go to whichever guitarist handles the leads, which are super-articulate and memorable without being the least bit over-technical or flashy, and the impassioned vocals of singer Tommy, who is definitely a singer and not a grunter or growler like so many of their peer bands feature. Whether he's singing songs of revenge, regret, or togetherness, you can always feel the sincerity jumping through the speakers. I don't think I've ever had an Oi! or even Oi!-adjacent record end up in my year-end favorites before, but goddamn, I cannot stop listening this masterpiece. Side note for fans of handsome men: the limited edition version of this EP features a very fetching photo of the aforementioned Tommy for a cover, though the regular edition art is pretty great as well.

This has been long, it's getting late and I'm

old. Fuck. I'll be back next month! Until then, catch me @andrew94116 on Instagram, email at agunderwood@gmail.com or write c/o the mag. Take care of each other!



Teachers, especially radical teachers, are faced with a problem. They are operating within a system circumscribed by state education policy, constrained by curriculum requirements and guidelines that often have little to do with actual education. In the Israeli occupied territories of Palestine, teachers face the same issue, albeit with the immense weight of the Israeli occupation hanging over everything. To understand how teachers in Palestine experience this situation, I interviewed my friend Murad Tamimi, a teacher from the village of Nabi Saleh in the West Bank. Murad is currently a teacher in the classroom after spending many years as an official in the General Union of Palestinian Teachers (GUPT). In addition to this experience he was and remains an activist against the occupation, from the time of the First Intifada in 1987 to the nonviolent Popular Resistance movement initiated by the villagers of Nabi Saleh in 2009. [Introduction and Interviewer: Mike Corr]

Resistance in the Palestinian Classroom: An Interview with Murad Tamim

MRR: Education in the West Bank was run by the Israeli military from 1967 until 1994, right? What was that like?
First, the curriculum was written entirely by Israelis. You couldn't talk about Palestinian history or the Palestinian cause. Of course, the teachers in the schools were Palestinian, so they weren't totally tied to that curriculum, but they had to be careful. You could never talk about current events, like the struggle in Lebanon or anything. Also, the curriculum was terrible. There was no creativity, just memorizing everything.

MRR: What were the conditions of life for teachers during that time?
In general, teachers had low salaries—900 shekels, about $250 a month, and if anybody tried to do anything political, to resist, they were fired or at least moved to another school with no warning. So the teachers were always oppressed and humiliated by the military administration. But you can say the same for the whole Palestinian people. Teachers got involved in resistance, either underground military resistance or forming unions, and doing different things. Some were arrested and suffered, others carried on and played a role in the revolutionary movement.

MRR: How did things change after Oslo and the introduction of the Palestinian Authority?
After Oslo, let's say from 1994 to 2000, there was a big change. In the schools, they started teaching about national issues, Palestine, the PLO, etc. But from the Second Intifada in 2000 until today it has gone from bad to worse. At first, teachers felt like they had freedom of speech within something like their own state, but the Palestinian Authority (PA) kept paying the same terrible salaries and the Education Ministry introduced its own curriculum, just like the old one with some superficial changes. Teachers still teach to the same exit exam—the *tawjihi*. The ministry talks a lot about critical thinking and holds workshops, but it's superficial. The teacher has to cover the book or the text, and it doesn't allow them to do any activities or anything like that. If the teacher misses some pages, then the students can't answer the questions. Teachers are handcuffed to the test.

Since 2000, the ministry also started to remove Arabic and religious studies material from the text books. They blame Hamas, but Hamas is just a symbol. These things are pillars of Palestinian identity and culture. Every two or three years from 2000 until now there have been three or four big curriculum changes. It has gone from bad to worse. You can ask any teacher and they'll say, "This is the worst curriculum I've ever taught."

The ministry is not a Palestinian institution! They manipulate the students' and parents' minds by superficial activities. They throw big celebrations and parties for graduation, and you see the officials in their black suits taking pictures for the internet, especially for the donors. In terms of education, I think it's worse than ever. In 2016 there was a big teachers' strike and a march in Ramallah. The PA repressed it using police checkpoints and everything. That was bad for the teachers, because they started to really feel that they are under occupation again and their freedom won't improve.

MRR: What is the reasoning behind changes in the curriculum, especially less emphasis on Arabic and Islam?
The Education Ministry is doing a fishy thing. I think the Israelis have a big role in all this. They sent a message to teachers to tell students not to memorize verses from the Quran because it won't be in the final exam. This has never happened! I heard people at the ministry are talking about erasing the Quran verses because it teaches students to be terrorists. I'm not defending fundamentalists and terrorists, but Islam and the Quran, you know, it's culture, it's a pillar of nationalism. Now in history class they say, if you want to teach history, you have to teach the other side—the Israel narrative. I think they're taking away the history of Palestine as a nation. Maybe we'll teach about Ramallah, and Nablus, Mahmoud Darwish, etc...but that's it.

MRR: Official public education isn't the only kind of education, right? Can you talk about the popular education during the First Intifada?
During the First Intifada in 1987, we had popular education. From 1987 to 1990, the Israelis would close the schools for months. Students held class in the streets or in homes, and many activists started doing popular education. We had classes in social centers and sports clubs. Of course, we took the old curriculum to prepare students for the test, but the methods were different because the teachers were activists. They started talking about real issues. After Oslo, all the old ways came right back.

MRR: As a teacher, how do you deal with the system?
The main problem we suffer is classroom management. The students feel they are going to prison and not school, and there is a big gap between teachers and students. The teachers have one main goal—control the class and cover the text. It's a sort of programming of the mind. They program teachers to be machines without stopping and thinking what they're doing. They're just a machine going in the morning and leaving in the afternoon. You ask any teacher, do you have good results in class? He'll say no, I'm just going there to spend time and take my salary.

As for me, I had a big fight with my supervisor. She came by my class at different times and saw that I tried to teach out of the curriculum, telling stories and doing activities. She said, you have to go back to the curriculum. I had a big fight with her and so I was suspended. Before that, they kept moving me from one school to the other. Which is a big problem—if you start telling students the truth, they move you. So you

have to be a machine. The administration and the ministry staff go to these workshops and conferences all around the world, spending millions of dollars from private donors and international aid, supposedly for improving the teachers. What are they doing? Just talking about modern teaching but there is no application. Who's the victim? The students. You can't change curriculum every fucking year, man. And it's not a strong curriculum! At school everything is a mess. No manners, misbehaving, no respect, and even if the teacher tries to punish or suspend a student, the whole ministry comes and blames the teacher. Nowadays you see drugs too, which you never saw in the past.

MRR: How do you see working inside or outside of the education system in Palestine?

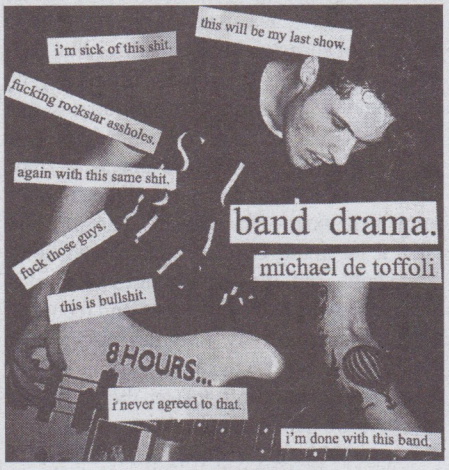
We can't go back to the same system with teachers as slaves and students as prisoners and nobody feeling like they learn anything. This Education Ministry is leading us towards something, and it isn't good, so we need a big revolution against them. Fuck the donors and fuck their money. Ask any Palestinian teacher, what are you teaching? What are the students learning? Do they love the school? Of course they will say no! This is what the occupation needs. You want to destroy a people? Destroy their education. You ask any student what are they going to be after they graduation, they will say Palestinian Security. They are just recruiting soldiers, illiterate and brainwashed, to fight each other. We are in a 100% corrupted situation here, and the only ones who make decisions are the corrupted ones. The ones who speak loud and tell the truth are going to end up like me, suspended and fired.

The occupation is not just Israeli, it's in the mind. I lived in the US and I saw some similarities, even if students and teachers have some freedom. Corruption is everywhere. Capitalism is everywhere. Business is business anywhere you go. Education is big business. They talk about investing in education, but they aren't investing in students. They are investing in education to make money. It's the same all over the world. Here in Palestine and in the US too, in a way, we're all under occupation. So I want to say if you want to be a teacher, the first thing is you have to be is free.

*[**Postscript:** Murad suggested that if people want to help in a small way they can donate any amount of money to Al-Quds Bard College for Arts and Sciences in Jerusalem, where thirteen Palestinian teachers are enrolled in the Masters of Arts in Teaching program. This program is one of the very few efforts to really help Palestinian teachers find ways to bring creativity and critical thinking into the classroom. For more information, please contact Rana Al-Surkhi, rsurakhi@staff.alquds.edu]*

Thus concludes the 40th installment of Teaching Resistance! The Teaching Resistance column is designed to provide a platform for radical, subversive teachers / educators to share their ideas and draw attention to important issues around education; particularly compulsory- and community-based education. If you are a teacher (anywhere in the world) for students of primary or secondary school ages (K-12), Community Colleges, or alternative learning arrangements such as collectivist free schools, and you want to submit an idea for a column, please write an email to teachingresistance@gmail.com

—John No, Teaching Resistance editor



Band Drama

Bandmates require time, attention, patience, forgiveness, stimulation, trust, and a general sense of commitment, same as a partner, and I believe that band relationships are just as important as any romantic relationship. They'll become a part of your life, good or bad, and if you're going to stay together, all these things need to be addressed. That's what this column is here for: to discuss why bands fight, why bands work or don't work, why bands succeed, and why bands break up. In almost every way, this is kind of a relationship column, to examine the fragile relationships that you have with your bandmates.

I had a conversation this last month with one of my bandmates that frustrated me, and I've been struggling to process it. I've re-re-re-written this column a few times now because I really don't know where to start, so I think I'm just going to talk it out: OK, so one of my favorite venues is closing (another one, right?!) but this one hurts really deeply. This venue was our last failsafe. It was the last venue in the city that would let anyone play, regardless of their draw or if they knew someone that worked there. They weren't judgmental or exclusive, and for anyone starting out this was your shot, and I always really admired them for that. They earned it too, they really earned that neighborhood. They made that block a place for punks, and we found a home there. One of the things that I really admired about it was the range of age and experience. Whatever new crop were coming in found their slot, then there were the established bands that came back because they respect the atmosphere and enjoy the nostalgia, and then there were the previous generation punks and groove metal long hairs that literally built that place. They were the ones that literally nailed the bar together, that literally put the paintbrush on the wall, that literally put the first kegs on their skateboards and rolled them through the service door. They were the ones that gave that place its distinguishing features, and the neighborhood responded positively. I have so much respect for that generation because I wouldn't have a music scene if not for the places that they built and the paths they forged.

So now that we're winding down to the last few shows, everyone is hoping for a chance to get on that stage one last time, but we're also aware of the limited amount of opportunities. So my bandmate starts saying "we should try to get a show there. It'd be amazing to play on the last night." He said this more than once, always wanted that coveted spot on the last night. He moved here about seven years ago from NY, and it sounds like the scene where he's from is very different (I've never been a part of that scene, so I can only speculate.) From what I've gathered by his attitude, it seems like their mantra is to grab the brass ring every time, all the time. So no matter what the situation, he tends to look for the biggest and best possible opportunity without really taking into account where we stand in the scene. I have a few friends whose bands have really blown up in the past few years, and he'll ask if I can get us an opening slot at the big venues they'll now play for their homecoming shows. It's strange to me, because I tend to think "who are we to ask for something like that?" We're still working on paying dues, we're nowhere near that level. I feel like if the stars were to align and we'd actually manage to score an opportunity like that, we'd be fucking over a band that's poised for that next step. Even if we kill it, we're disrespecting the groundwork that this other band has laid. So for him to really want that honored slot of closing a venue that we have no history in, how would that go? "Hey, thank y'all for coming. It's such an honor to play the final show here. We've played here...um,

twice. Not really big or important shows or anything, I think they were on a Wednesday but I can't remember. I don't know any of that bartenders' names, and I've never really hung out here except for those two shows. I don't live in this neighborhood or anything, and I'm not really a part of your family, but hey, thanks for the opportunity, it means a lot."

I can be really strict when it comes to scene etiquette, I'm aware of that, but if we were to try to worm our way into that historic show it would be like crashing a funeral and demanding to make a speech just to get to hold a mic in front of a crowd. I'm not trying to shit on the guy, I'm acknowledging that he and I come from very different scenes. It's not my place to say which approach is best based on the people and bands contributing, but I know how much that stage meant to the people that built it, and I don't have the heart to take it from them. There's a time and a place, and we got to enjoy that historic venue on those two occasions. I'm very grateful for those opportunities and those memories. I think our contribution was just that, and I'm glad that we got to contribute what we did, when we did. So RIP Hemlock Tavern, and thank you so much to all the punks that made it what it was while we had the chance. I'm really looking forward to attending the bittersweet farewell show.

Each month BAND DRAMA will either be reviewing a universal issue that all bands face, or I'll be reviewing one of your band's issues. If you'd like a fresh perspective, advice, or just to vent in general (anonymously or not), reach out to banddramamrr@gmail.com. I've been in a lot of bands for the past sixteen years, which means that I've been in a lot of bands that have ended or failed. I'd like to think that I've grown from each, learned from each, and taken the time to reflect on each failure or success. I'm also still learning and experiencing, and I always will be. So I want to share what I've learned, as well as learn from all y'all punks in bands too.

The Pink Noise

Canada's the Pink Noise has been releasing a slew of vinyl, cassette and digital albums for the past 12 years. Our reporter Peter Welles caught up with the band for the following interview.

MRR: We are sitting here on the banks of the historic Lachine canal in Montreal, speaking to Mark Sauner of the Montreal band the Pink Noise. Mark, thank you very much for doing this interview.
Mark: Thank you so much for conducting it.

MRR: Now, little is known about you, you seem to have started as a bedroom project, releasing your own CD-Rs. When did this start?
Mark: It would have started around 2006. I had returned from teaching English in South Korea, and I had a bunch of money on my hand,s and I didn't want to work an actual job, so I started making music and released CD-Rs to give to my friends and sent out some demos, and it grew from there.

MRR: At some point you started getting picked up by labels such as Kill Shaman, Sacred Bones, before Sacred Bones was even known, Almost Ready Records, and numerous other releases. How did you get your demos into the hands of these people and how did the interest get sparked?
Mark: The interest got sparked strictly from having a Myspace page. There was a community in those days where there were so many like-sounding bands that they coined it "weird punk," which I think basically meant rock'n'roll but with some reverb on the vocals or really lo-fi production techniques. So all the bands were connected by a similar sound, and what happened was through a Myspace friend of mine, Mike Sniper from Blank Dogs, he requested that I send him some CD-Rs of my music, and after I sent them out to him, he said "thank you, I will do something with these." Then an Almost Ready 7" compilation The World's Lousy with Ideas, I was included on that. Also, an Almost Ready 7" called Sun King. Then Mike Sniper connected me with Caleb, who had just started Sacred Bones.

MRR: Did you start the band in Montreal?
Mark: No, I started the band in Toronto in a high rise apartment where the rent was so cheap that people did not complain that I was making music in the bedroom.

MRR: Besides Toronto, was there any other place you lived and made music?
Mark: There was an opportunity to play WNYU Make the Product. This was a radio show on WNYU, they were having a ten-year anniversary show, and also around this time, Sacred Bones had a showcase at SXSW. This was all in 2009, and I had become so sickened of Toronto and having those opportunities in the States, yet another Myspace friend of mine, who was based out of Detroit, his name's Justin Walker. To transition from a bedroom recording artist to a live show, I wanted to work with him because I really liked his music, which was called High Speed Dubbing. I also had relatives in Detroit. After moving from Toronto, I stayed in Detroit for a short while to practice for those shows. After that was done, I stayed with my parents for a month, trying to decide what to do. I had met so many people from Montreal who kind of convinced me of moving here. I moved here the same year, 2009.

Photos by James Bray and Emily Pelstring

MRR: Now to get to the sound of comparisons of your music, early references have been such bands as Suicide, Chrome, styles such as glam rock, punk, all the way to Afrobeat. What other musical influences do you think would surprise people who would listen to your music?
Mark: I really liked Outkast's The Love Below. Going back even further in time, it was the Doors who were the first rock'n'roll band and the first music, which was a gift of a CD from my uncle. So that's kind of the basis of the music I make is the best of the Doors. Because from then on I've always loved keyboards and those kind of drum patterns.

MRR: So it wasn't basic punk influences?
Mark: Not at all. I didn't even hear the Ramones until much later, sometime in my 20s. In general, punk had such a gaey sound, a colorless sound that I wasn't really interested in. But of course I was more interested in the aggression, the more kind of raging standoffishness of it.

MRR: Were there other bands you played with before you started this bedroom project?
Mark: Yeah.

MRR: What instruments were you playing?
Mark: I met a couple guys in my hometown, Newmarket, and they were already so established in that they would do their own bedroom recordings and they would all be able to switch different instruments and had taught themselves bass and drums and guitar and keyboards and singing. Through these guys, I knew I wanted to do that as well. This was when I was about nineteen. They were probably the biggest influences on me because they taught me how to record and gave advice when I'd give them these CD-Rs, like "this is the best song." You could kind of fine tune it from there.

At this point in the interview the Realistic tape recorder purchased at the local mission crapped out! So we will go to the other half of the Pink Noise, Graeme Langdon.

MRR: When and how did you first hear the Pink Noise?
Graeme: Probably MySpace. Do you need me to expand on that? Well, in the early 2000s there was an internet service, kind of like the Bandcamp of the day, and it was called Myspace. You could go on there and post your music and make friends and talk to people, and I think we became aware of Pink Noise through that. That was in the context of a vibrant time for having bands and discovering new bands that were maybe four hundred miles away that were still somehow for some reason fucking around with the same crazy idea.

MRR: Was Terminal Boredom important in those days?
Graeme: I think we were on Termbo, and if not actively posting, at least lurking. You know, finding out what was what. So it was kind of an otherworldly kind of thing, the Terminal Boredom crowd being comprised mostly of American and some European posters, so it felt in that old Canadian subordinate insecure way that what they had going on there represented an echelon above. Then to begin seeing a Canadian band like Pink Noise talked about on there, I think generated... It was exciting for all of us to think, who's this band? Who's this mysterious band? Then Mark moved to Montreal, case closed.

MRR: How do you get involved with the group?
Graeme: I don't know, I think I was drinking a lot back then, can't really remember much. Well, I had a band with my partner Emily and another guy named Johnny, and it was a weird fucking band. There was a relationship in the band plus I was about to be starting a graduate degree in library science and it would take me out of town a lot. So it was decided to sort of can that band, which was called Futensil. I started library school, traveling out of town a lot for that. I think whatever version of the Pink Noise was or had been operational at that point had begun to dissolve, and I think Mark and I just discussed playing together. At the time, we set up just an amplifier, I think just a guitar, in a very cluttered bedroom in our house and had at it.

MRR: And the rest of the band?
Graeme: Then there was some discussion of drummers, and luckily we ended up with Tara, and that's it.

MRR: You recorded two studio albums with the Pink Noise, Greedy Heart and *House of Cards*. What's the difference in style and approach between the two records?
Graeme: Hard to say. I think Greedy Heart was ultimately more of a punk record. I think at the time we were the outfit that recorded it, Mark, me, Tara and Matt Samways were... probably Tara and I pushing ourselves physically to not only come up with a challenging sideways way of making punk music but then also trying to play it very fast, faster and faster, perhaps ultimately a bit of a disservice to the tunes. House of Cards was kind of recorded at the very end of a period of I think, beneath the surface, struggling with the project. On the one hand we had just done a US tour and were writing quite excellent stuff, but on the other hand there was a lot of, like, bandmate shuffling, people coming in and leaving the band. In that case, we showed up to record a little sloppier than we were on the first record, but we had savvy producer who encouraged us to slow it down a bit. I think that was helpful in sort of, like, teasing out a looseness and groove to the songs.

MRR: You did a tour for House of Cards recently across Canada. What was that experience like?
Graeme: It was grueling. The takeaways were that we have a very big, very, very big country with very, very few people or cities in it. It's a devastating

and difficult landscape for an artist of any sort to try to exist here and to try to network and move across communities, towns, cities. You know I can't speak for people who have far more experience than I and there are people who do it all the time but, it's a big goddamn country. It was fun to do. There were moments of great ecstasy, but ultimately it was such a rush and such distance, such a physically and mentally trying thing. You know, a twelve-hour, followed by a ten-hour drive, followed by another twelve-hour drive as opposed to two or three, which one might get to enjoy in the United States. But played with a few good bands, met a few great people.

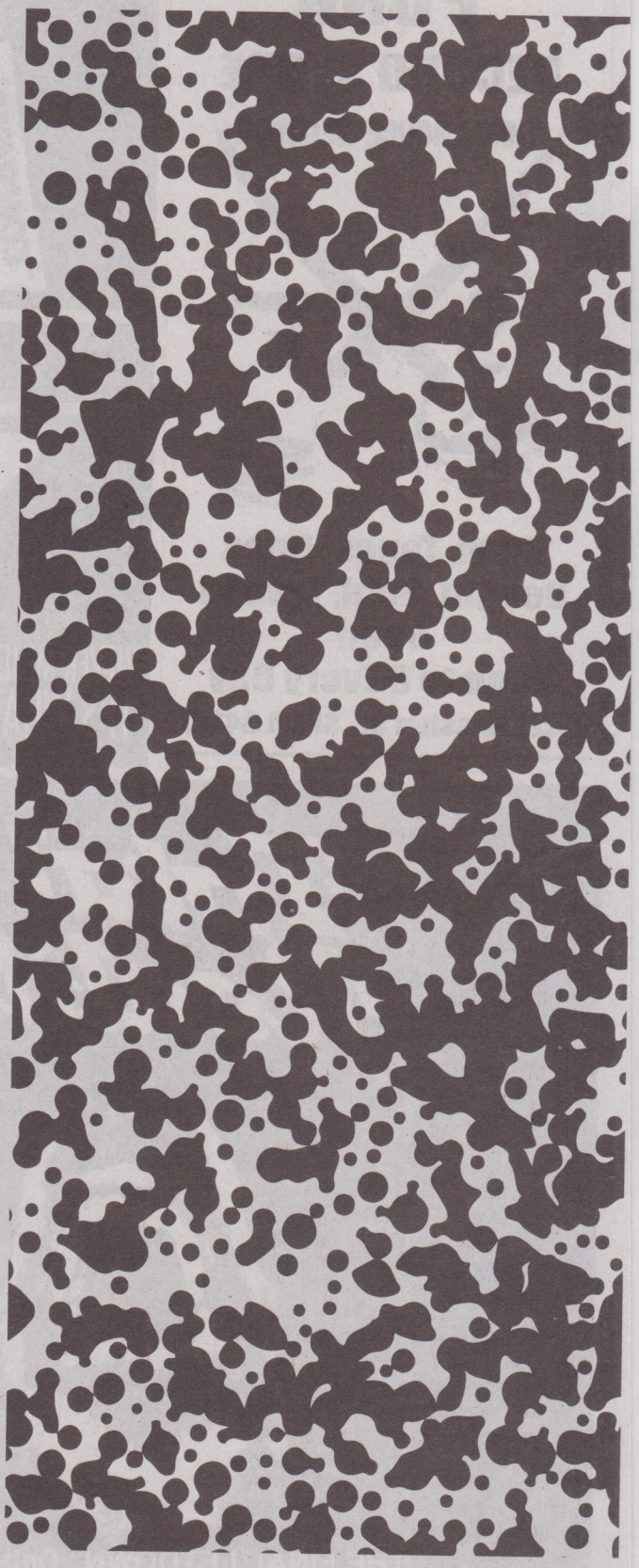
MRR: How would you describe the current live show?
Graeme: It's good, it's interesting. The current live show is me on samples and guitar and Mark singing. So having me personally only ever in my life played in proper full band scenarios with multiple live players, it's radically different. This is the case for the song composition as well. So on the one hand what is lost is the sort of collective creative experience of spontaneous creation. But on the other hand, what I at least personally gain is a full experience of and understanding of the composition of these songs, which is resulting in a more structured, more coherently or obviously structured material. But I'm getting a greater sense of the layering of elements into a song, so that's good. In the live sense, now without the full band, it's just two old schlubs more or less standing there. So it might not be as dynamic as a live band, but we're working on some ideas for that.

MRR: You ran a record label Psychic Handshake for a few years while playing in the band. How did you find the time to do all these things?
Graeme: Well, I did a pretty bad job of it, ran a record label that would have lasted from 2007 or so until a couple years ago. It was both a great passion and something I wish I could again, and also a fucking fool's errand and one that just got more challenging year after year after year with, you know, sort of external structural assault on the DIY sort of music community in Canada, the cost of postage, the conservative governments decimation of Canada Post, the rise of utterly stupid music streaming and a complete recalibration of how people relate to music. So I feel, maybe Mark or you can think of the analogy I'm trying to think of here. Or maybe it's in one of our songs, "The Aging Champion," the put-out-to-pasture prize fighter who no longer belongs, at least in that sense, in that side of things.

MRR: Are there any contemporary bands out there now that you find interesting?
Graeme: Having run a record label, it was a great impulse to keep abreast of contemporary DIY, punk, and experimental music. But as a result of sinking all my damn money into the record label, one could only ever be like aware of what was going on and not acquainted with it as much as I would like to be. Now my life, I have a little bit more money at my disposal and can enjoy record shopping more, but it's mostly reissues. For contemporary bands? I don't know. There's certainly always lots of amazing stuff going on. From our tour, we played with a band Janitor Scum and they're fantastic. Otherwise I'm kind of blanking right now. I would say my favorite band is Ono from Chicago, and that's fantastic, truly strange, weird stuff.

MRR: Do you have any plans for recording or touring?
Graeme: We are playing a festival in a couple weeks. Mark and I have discussed going down, trying to hook up something in NYC in the late fall. Recording? I would love to record this new material. I think it might be more broadly appealing than the material on House of Cards, and because it had been written and sort of like demo recorded in such a different way than we previously operated, there could be interesting results. On the one hand, the songs are kind of set in stone, but on the other hand, I think the recording context would be interesting opportunities to play with it. One year from now or so, I would like to be on the road again, ideally not somewhere outside Saskatoon, maybe Europe, maybe the States.

thepinknoise.bandcamp.com



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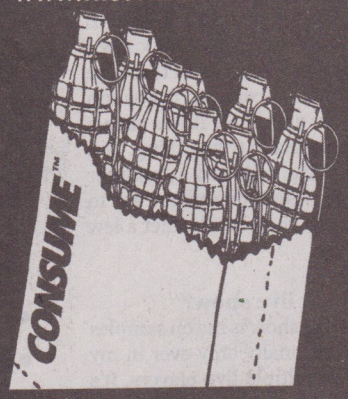

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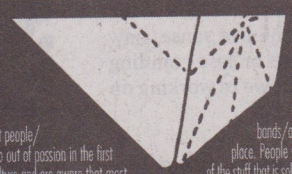

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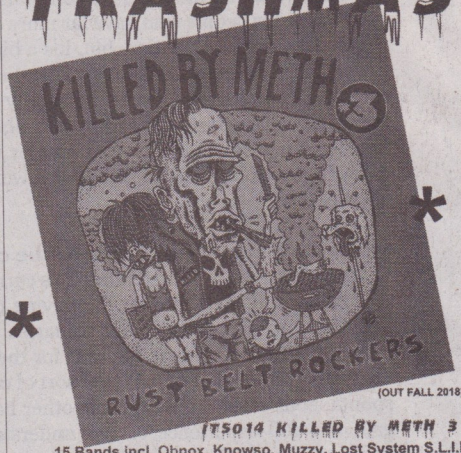
* MERRY TRASHMAS *



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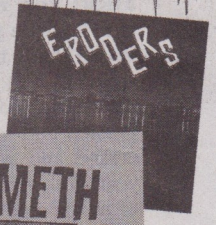

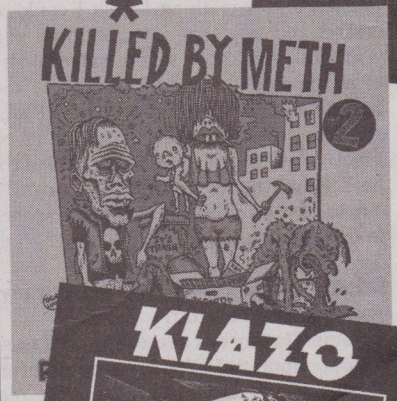

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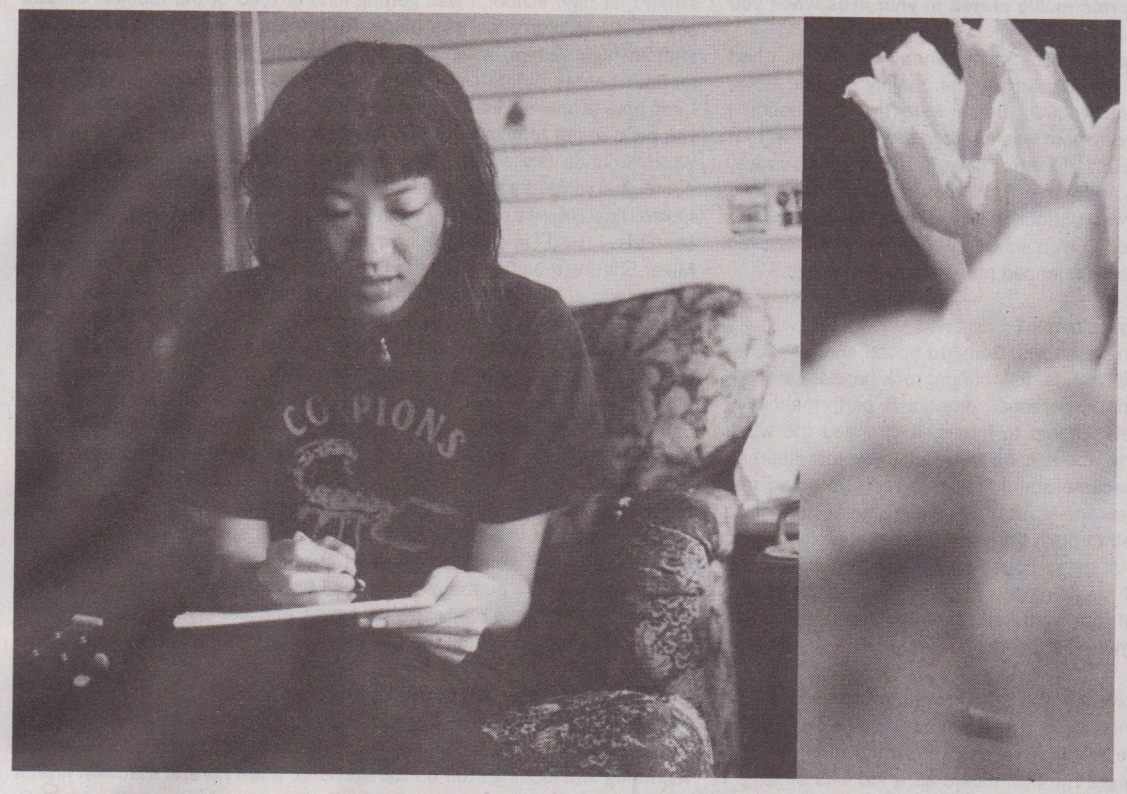

PHOTOS BY MIKE NAIDEAU, KATE SHEELY, RYAN EILBECK
DESIGN BY NIRZAR

INTERVIEW BY KELLY CHAN

The unflinching sincerity of songwriters Frances Chang and Mike Naideau pushes to the surface in ten tracks, some churning with lush, dissonant textures evocative of post-rock, others springing forth with syncopated percussion and racing guitars, all of them gathering lyric and melody to paint flashes of worlds that are natural, urban, and interior.

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This year, New York-based Giant Peach released its second full-length album, But You Made Me Such A Beautiful Thing. The album begs to be listened to in full, with songs that make room for the searching honesty of the bedroom demo as well as the catalytic energy of the full-band performance. Chang and Naideau recently sat down with a friend to talk about music, about growing up in the suburbs, living in New York City, traveling, and staying open to change.

—

GIANT peach

MRR: Can you talk about the role music played in your lives when you were younger?

Mike: I wasn't really interested in playing music when I was a kid. I had some cassettes that I would listen to in the car, mainly Beastie Boys, Primus, White Zombie, and Jamiroquai. Those were the four bands I liked—this was in middle school. There was a record store downtown that we would go to, but I didn't really get into music in a more serious way until high school. There was a pretty thriving music scene on Long Island at the time, in many of the towns surrounding Northport, which is where I grew up. Lots of the older kids in high school played music and booked house shows, and that definitely influenced me and people my age.

MRR: When did you start playing music?

Mike: Soon after I started going to shows. Going to house shows—super DIY basement shows with punk bands, folk bands, rock bands, hardcore bands, but all very raw, intimate, personal, emotional performances—had a big influence on my relationship to music. It changed the way I thought about it. I didn't think about it as this thing you just listened to and enjoyed anymore; it became something that really affected me, something that I really felt personally. That influenced me to pick up a guitar and try to express myself through that medium, because it seemed really powerful. And everyone at these house shows was very accepting. No one made you feel weird for being the one younger kid there who didn't drink or party—none of that mattered. There was no pressure in this setting. It was all about mutual support and loving each other, which was really powerful.

I also owe a lot to my older brother, who introduced me to people in the music scene and acted as a natural kind of avenue through which I could meet people and hear and see bands. That was an extra level of comfort.

Frances: The thing that really got me into music as a kid was singing. I remember the first album that my mom ever got me was Like a Prayer by Madonna. I listened to a lot of female ballad kind of things. I listened to Mariah, I listened to Celine Dion, and I listened to Madonna—like, a lot. I think as a kid, I always wanted to express myself creatively, but I went through phases of experimenting with how to do it. Initially, I was really into drawing. I drew a lot. Then, in fourth grade, we had this mandatory play. It was weird if you decided to opt out, it was more normal to just suck it up and do it. So I joined that play, and I was a shy kid, but I realized that performing felt really natural to me. And it was a musical, and I really liked singing. So I started getting really into doing musicals and discovering musicals that I liked. I had really specific taste—I didn't like more classic sounding musicals; I was into more contemporary sounding stuff.

When I hit high school, I was getting kind of tired of the musical theater scene. It just didn't feel like it was for me anymore. But there was this shift in high school, when I started becoming more social in a larger group, whereas before I was more of a loner. I remember thinking, "Oh! I get how to make friends, how to commune with a larger social group: you have to get familiar with some media to connect with people about." Which sounds like a robot, but literally, I thought I just needed to find some shared context. So I started discovering movies I liked and music I liked. LastFM was really big at the time, so I was checking out people's LastFMs. I used Limewire like crazy.

Mike: Sharing music through the internet was a big part of my experience with music at that age as well. I would use GetFile. Or Soulseek. I was constantly browsing other people's libraries of music and sharing mine.

Frances: At that point my music taste was really broad. I had different friends who were introducing me to a lot of different stuff. There was just a huge intake. I remember educating myself on basic levels. My parents are immigrants, and they didn't really show me any classic American canon music at all, besides my mom randomly liking a couple John Lennon and Neil Young songs. So I went through a huge obsession with the Beatles. There was so much. Music played a lot of roles for me then, but eventually it became almost like a soundtrack thing. I was so intensely emotional in high school. I was going through a lot of stuff—family stuff, heartbreaks, whatever. There are so many memories I have of going on walks by myself and listening to these really specific songs, and just crying. The cinematicness helped me really feel the full extent of my feelings.

MRR: When did you start making your own music?

Frances: In middle school I was already writing songs on the piano and on an acoustic guitar. In high school, I got an electric guitar, and I started recording and looping stuff on GarageBand. It felt natural that way. It took a long time for me to feel confident playing guitar, because it was really all in the service of writing songs. It was all about recording songs and making them really complex—doing vocals and guitar, doing multiple tracks. For a long time, I'm sure I couldn't even play those songs live.

MRR: How did you start sharing your music?

Frances: I would record a song, finish it, and the first thing I would do was send it to a bunch of friends. We would play it in the car. I didn't have any shame at the time about listening to my own music. I would record something and listen to it on repeat afterwards. That was the reward.

Mike: I didn't start recording music right away. I got more involved in just being part of the scene, booking shows, or collaborating with other

people. We would make a compilation, and I would have one song in it, but I wasn't making full albums of my own music quite yet. I think my approach was to play and record a lot of music at my house, by myself, not for anyone else, quietly, in my bedroom. In high school, I put out a few tapes and CDs of my music, but I would play and record it all at my house, and perfect it to a point where I wanted to make all the artwork, finish the product, and then share it. I was more drawn to the idea of the album than the song. Maybe it had a lot to do with that era, when records and CDs were made with a lot of care, often handmade, in limited edition, and the artwork would be different on each one. I really loved that aspect of music—feeling like you could get an object from a band that was a document of their work, not just this and not necessarily a mass-produced thing.

MRR: When did the two of you first hear each other's music?

Frances: I remember the first show I played in college. This is when I was younger, and I didn't have any fear. I didn't overthink things. Fortune favors the brave: you go for opportunities, and then it works out so fortuitously. I remember, we were at our radio show—me, you [Kelly], and our friend Ariel—and Ariel was Instant Messaging with our friend Sam who was putting on a house show, and I remember just being like, "Hey, you should ask him if I can play." So she messaged Sam, and he was like, "Yeah, definitely." And so it was done. I remember I practiced a bunch for that—kicked my roommate out of my room — felt fine, and then played it. That was that house show with our friend Carsten, who was playing as Photosynthesis, and Karl Blau. And Wildebeest.

Mike: Sam and I booked that show together.

Frances: I was so proud, because Karl Blau also used a loop pedal. He came and talked to me afterwards about how he liked my use of the loop pedal, and then during his set he improvised a song about how inspired he was by my use of the loop pedal.

Mike: I have some vivid memories of that show. I remember seeing you *[Frances]* from the crowd. I remember listening to you, and seeing you play, and thinking that it was really, really good. We had just gotten to college then, and it was a pretty surreal experience standing outside of that house with you and all these people I knew before college, like Matt and my brother and Evan [all of Wildebeest]. And Karl Blau was there. What a cool thing to have happen so quickly. I think I was riding on some carryover high school momentum, thinking I gotta keep booking shows, gotta bring a music scene from my home to my college and see if it works. So yeah, the first time I saw Frances play was definitely at that house show. In December 2007, at 148 College Avenue, in Poughkeepsie, New York.

Frances: The first time I remember really hearing Mike's music—I remember I tripped on acid for the first time, and Mike and I got together later in the day and recorded this whole improvised album on my loop pedal, with all these built-in drum machine beats. It was like cartoony, acid-sounding, psychedelic stuff. We actually have a tape of that. It's called Pancakes on Acid. That was the first time that I really heard Mike's style, which is really distinct, and was extremely distinct back in the day. Really rhythmic, really percussive. I remember being struck by how incredibly original it felt and sounded to me. Just like, an electric kind of energy.

MRR: What was it like collaborating at first?

Frances: Even with Pancakes on Acid, if you listen to it, you can hear the style of the songs kind of switch off. Because Mike has a really distinct style, and I guess so do I. So what I think would happen is that one of us would take the lead, and then the other would just be supportive, and I think that's how our collaboration style has always been. When we both started really playing, we were arranging songs that we had already written for each of our individual projects in full-band style.

Mike: Yes, that's well said. Whoever's song it was would take the lead and essentially show up to practice with the entire song finished, with room for things to change, but the structure is there, the idea is there. I think that foundational mindset has been continuous throughout our collaboration.

Frances: If there was more flexibility, it was probably in response to other people in the band. I mean, bands are also about collaboration. But somehow, between me and Mike, there was this unspoken thing where we didn't want to impose on each other's vision. We just wanted it to be pure, trust the person's vision, and trust that it was what it was. It wasn't a conscious ideal that we had. It was natural.

MRR: How have you approached making records? My impression is that you don't set out to make one from scratch, but you kind of amass material in an open-ended way and then decide to synthesize things into an album.

Frances: I think the reason that albums exist is because people tend to have waves of creative inspiration. Songs that you write during a certain period tend to be cohesive in a way because they're all of that time. So our albums have felt varying levels of cohesiveness because they were amassed from longer periods and then squished into an album.

Mike: I totally agree. That's definitely what happened with this last record. We went through an intense period of writing super creatively and differently from before, and we found ourselves with a group of people who were as dedicated to it as Frances and I were. We just really enjoyed writing and playing and practicing together, like as often and for as long as we possibly could at the time.

Frances: For this last record, most of the songs were skeletons that I brought in. With the earlier records, I felt like Mike was constantly—from my perspective—flowing with inspiration. With Tarantula, he just had all these songs that he kept writing, and I remember struggling to keep up. I felt like I needed to hold up my half, because that was the conception of the band. But I was dry for so long, up until I wrote songs for this album. This was the biggest batch of songs that I'd ever written, and it was the most inspired that I had felt for a really long time. I think that is one reason why this record sounds cohesive. We also arranged this one together a lot. There was a lot of dogged, detail-oriented collaboration.

Mike: This record presents our most challenging work ever—challenging to us as a band, with regards to the writing process, but also to the listener in certain ways. Some of the songs are long, with a lot of different parts and things going on—just endless intricacies from start to finish. It can be tiresome for some. But I'm proud that it is a thing that we made. I think it's an interesting documentation of a certain era of our band, our relationships, and a period of intense collaboration.

MRR: When you're writing lyrics, how do you know what material from your personal lives you want to put into your music? How do you know what feels ready to share?

Frances: I obscure things. These very private thoughts are literally the reasons that I'm writing these songs. I need to get these thoughts and feelings out, but I also need some privacy from all the people I know who are making this music with me and who are watching the shows.

Mike: I approach my writing with a level of vagueness. That's just the way I write. It often comes out in verse form, like more poetic journal entries. Sometimes I'll write a phrase, then skip a few lines, write another phrase, skip a few lines, write a phrase, and then I'll go back and kind of fill in the blanks, and it will take on a form that makes sense to me. To someone else, it might seem really abstract, but to me, the raw emotion is there.

I also approach my writing from a grander perspective. The initial push to write can come from a personal experience, but I don't sit down and document it in a detailed way. I'll touch on my own personal experience, but then immediately zoom out and see myself in this big-world perspective, and see these greater waves of emotion that are hidden.

Frances: Same, actually. The core of an experience to me is not the physical details, like, "We walked to the water and sat there." It's what is psychologically or emotionally going on. I think because of that, my lyrics turn out to be almost general sounding, but they are specific thoughts. That's what has been coming out most recently. It's become very internal, not very based in physical reality.

I also don't really write my lyrics first. What happens is that they arise in tandem with music. One lyric set to a certain melody will feel really right, and I'll be like, "That's concrete, I know it." So where the music and the lyrics meet, there will be something that feels really solid, and then the whole song will build out from that one brick. Each time a brick like that happens, I'll feel certain about that, and everything else will form around it. It's a spacey process.

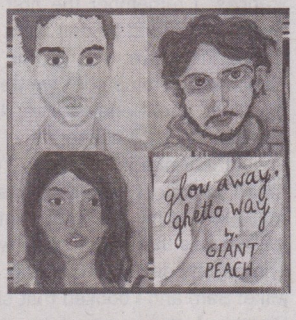
MRR: I've been thinking about how place, our physical environment, influences artistic expression. What have you noticed about how where you put yourself affects what comes out?

Mike: It's hard for me to sit in my bedroom and write. It's easier when I'm sitting by a waterfront at night, or when I'm on an airplane or train, or when I'm traveling to a new place and have an open schedule. I find inspiration in moving, traveling, and being stimulated by new surroundings.

Frances: I really agree. To really nail something down, I have to be in my room with an instrument and something to record with. But when it's still forming—like what I was talking about with the brick, and this lyric and this melody feeling concrete—I've started to write stuff while walking around the city, just singing and figuring it out in my head. And that's really cool because you're always commuting in New York.

Maybe one day I will want to go more into that, but for the most part, I just want to chill and experience different stuff, and New York is somewhere you can do that. I think about how I've been holding this place open for music—like staying in day jobs, not going to grad school, not going into any other career—as if it's any day now that I'm going to devote everything to music and make it into a career. But I've been thinking more and more that it's ok for me to follow other interests too, and that doesn't necessarily mean I'm giving up on music. If I'm honest with myself, I should study psychology and do more with that. I just know that my natural interests are so ready to leap into that. But I have this attachment to "being an artist" and living this "artist's life." And I wonder how much of it is following my natural interests, and how much of it is not.

Mike: Yeah, New York is a city where you really have to work to live. The



MRR: I wanted to talk about what it's been like for you to live in New York. Your songs describe feelings of being trapped, overwhelmed, stuck, being faced with uncertainty and failure, but there's a sense of constant movement too—of still going on. These things aren't particular to New York, but they feel acute here.

Frances: I think something that is particular to New York is this feeling of almost not being able to go on. Life can get you down so hard here. In New York, it's clear that there's an industry, and people come here with ambitions, so there is some kind of motivation propelling people to be here and do anything here. It's weird trying to exist outside of those hierarchies and that path of success. It's not easy to do, because it's always there. And so I think failure can feel so much worse here, and become such a thing that it might not be in places where there isn't as much pressure. You're constantly needing to justify going forward, needing to justify doing all this stuff, making this music. Everyone needs to keep busy, and you want to always be "doing things." And that's not really how I roll. I can do nothing for long periods of time, and I don't think it really gets me down that much, except for that pressure.

Mike: Yeah, New York felt like a natural place to go, in terms of it being a place where so much art and music is constantly happening. There are people we know here, and there are opportunities to do new things and meet new people. But when you're traveling and going on tour, you see different cities and lifestyles. It's interesting to compare how other people who are playing in bands are able to survive. It's common to work a service job two to three days a week and have that be enough to pay your rent and to pay for a practice space, and give you lots of free time to work on your personal creative projects.

Frances: But also, we live in New York because we want to do a lot of different things. I don't need to only make music or only produce art. majority of the people I know here in the punk scene have to work so much to pay rent. The stress level here is very high, comparatively, and these things can make you feel down on the city.

Frances: And they can make you conceive of a concept like "failure." I mean, you go through ups and downs in life, and you go through periods where things are coalescing on a much more unconscious level, when you're going through changes and shifts. Sometimes there is so little appreciation for those periods that you end up just slapping a label like "failure" on them.

Mike: It's a perspective issue. It's one way of looking at it. Another way is figuring out how to make it work if you want to be here, which we all clearly do. New York can be a beautiful, freeing place, unlike anywhere else that I've ever been. I think it has its moments when you'll get hit with waves reminding you why it's so great to be here—the history, all the people you're surrounded by, and all the energy you're surrounded by. That's the kind of positive energy of the city that I try to harness, and maybe what influences me to continue trying to do art, even though it's sometimes a struggle.

Frances: Art as a career is what tells you that you always have to be making art because it's your job. I've always been of the camp that believes that art comes out because it has to. To me, when something feels "inspired," it came out because it had to. There's nothing wrong with having a practice and making music whenever you sit down, but from my perspective, there's a difference in how it sounds. They're both valuable, but who says you have to be doing it all the time? If there's no reason, no impetus, to me, it almost doesn't make sense.

You know, you have to gather up experiences to make them come out. New York is like a big psychedelic trip: you can spiral down a really bad trip, which is really easy here, because it can be stylistically cool to be

cynical and negative here, to bitch about your horrible day, bitch about this, bitch about that. That's one version of the cartoon New York. I see people get stuck here in sad places all the time, and I do too, but it's not because of cynicism. Also, you can turn over a new leaf here in one day. It's so much easier to make money here than anywhere else. If you're in debt, and you need $500, you can just go make $500. It might be really uncomfortable, but you could go get that money relatively quickly. If you have the energy and the mindset to just go there, you can start a new life in a day. You can go meet new people and be in a whole different world in one day. It's obviously difficult to conceive of that mentally, but you can do it. It's possible here.

MRR: I think all three of us also appreciate leaving New York and learning and growing from travel. How do you think traveling has influenced you and your art?

Mike: It has broadened my sense of vision and my understanding of the world. Leaving this country for an extended period of time has been powerful, in terms of experiencing other ways of life and reflecting on the way I operate here, and taking a step back from being so absorbed by it. It has allowed me to see myself from a more distant perspective. It's difficult to achieve that when you're stuck in your daily routines. I can't emphasize enough the importance of getting a sense of the size of the world, and realizing how what you are experiencing at a certain place and a certain time is such a small, individual glimpse into all that is going on. That idea just blows my mind over and over.

Frances: And back to our conversation about New York, I think the kind of existence that appeals to us here has so much to do with having this really flexible mindset—the idea that things can change overnight, that things can always be new. It's easy to fall into routines, because it's easy to cling to the familiar, but I think that something we aspire to is to live more open and organic lives full of newness and transformation. And that is possible here, but I think because it is such a mindset thing, traveling can help spark that nomadic lifestyle.

I'd say that I try to live a nomadic lifestyle here in New York. I really want things to feel different everyday; I want to feel open to newness. There's something about traveling that simulates that, because you don't have an agenda, and you're just open to following a different kind of thread—

like a thread of synchronicities—where the meaning is formed as you're going. When the backdrop is zooming by you, you enter a more meditative mindset, and you can kind of focus on yourself more. When you're on tour, for instance, you're so in touch with yourself, because all you have is yourself, and you're observing your thoughts and the feelings that arise from those thoughts. And there's the forward motion: you have to keep going, so you have to figure out a way, and you don't have anything to rely on. I find that I'm more quietly in touch with myself when I get back from traveling.

Mike: I almost equate traveling to acquiring new lenses through which you can view your life, through experiencing different lifestyles and cultures

firsthand, and seeing how other people live. I think the more lenses you have acquired, the more holistic your relationship with living can become.

Frances: Also, when you stay in the same place where you grew up—since we all grew up around here—there's the whole nature versus nurture question. Where we're from is such a huge part of who we are, but so much of our lives are circumstantial, based on the people we met, the worlds we fell into. Sometimes I feel a tension with the scenes that I've fallen into, like I don't feel like they're a perfect reflection of me. So, going somewhere else that has nothing to do with where you're from, and seeing what resonates with you, is a great way of finding out the nature part of yourself. What echoes so specifically to you is so clear.

Our artistic scene transcends place. It's made up of people in all different places.

Mike: When I think about my strongest, most personal connections, with regards to people I know who are making art and music, I think of it as connecting dots that are all over the place. I have a lot of friends in New York whose music and art I love and respect, but as a whole it feels more disjointed than that. A lot of that has come from traveling, meeting people, keeping in touch, sharing and exchanging where there's a mutual resonance. That's been one of the greatest rewards from all of the energy and effort that I have put into music.

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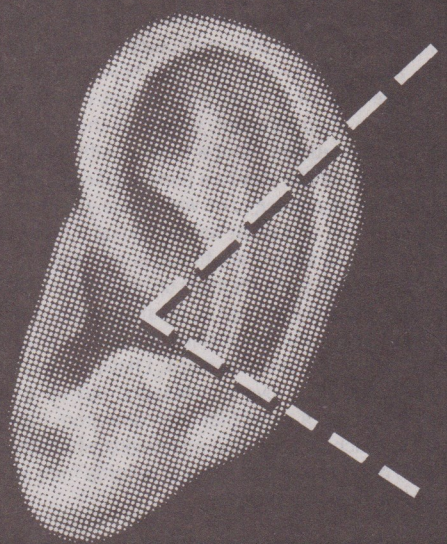

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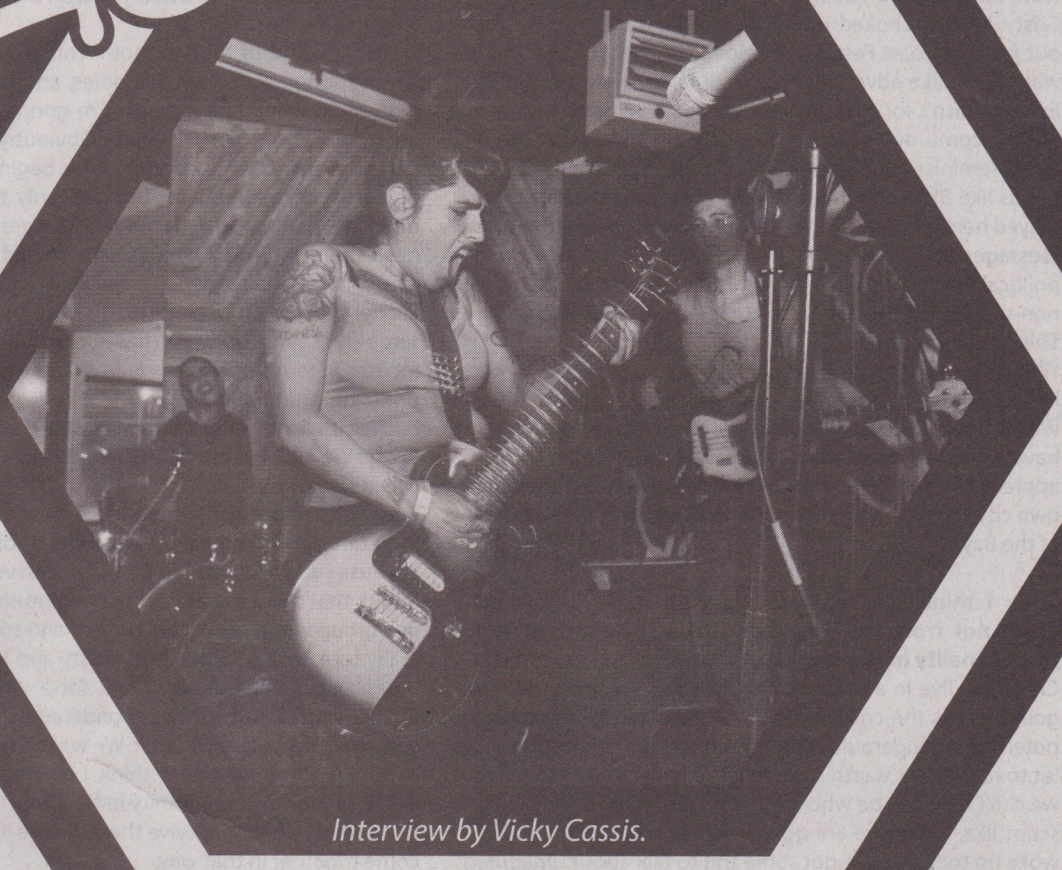

Interview by Vicky Cassis.

Photos by Jonathan Botkin and Kate Hoos.

I knew seeing Choked Up on their recent West Coast Tour was going to be awesome, but I didn't expected to actually get choked up while watching them play. Here we have a pop punk band that sounds just like bands that made me fall in love with the drama, but they're delivering it from the perspective of people who want to keep trying despite having been through some shit. Their message is incredibly relatable to punks who've experienced isolation and trauma, and I'm so glad they let me sit down with them and put this interview together. For fans of over-sharing, queer friendship, and Green Day.

MRR: Hi everybody! Who are you? What do you do in Choked Up? What pronouns do you use?
Cristy: I'm Cristy Road. I sing, play guitar, write the lyrics, and have a lot of feelings. I use she / her pronouns.
Rachel: My name is Rachel. I play guitar and occasionally sing. She / her pronouns.
Wes: I'm Wes, he / him, I play drums.
Rose: I'm Rose, she / her, I play bass.

MRR: Tell me what we're doing here today. Where are you from and why are you here in Berkeley?
Cristy: We are Choked Up, and we're here because we came out for Lost Coast Fest. They helped us get out here, and we wanted to take advantage of our time here and do this tour. Even it wasn't for that, I think we would've gone out of our way to come out here, because it feels important. The first queer feminist punk scene I heard of was in the Bay Area, with bands like Blatz and Pansy Division. So far, every show we've played here, people are introducing songs, having intentional messages. It's not even that these shows feel like intentionally political spaces—it's just how it is. I could be idealizing as a non-resident of the Bay Area, but it's very exciting to be here. This is our second tour.
Wes: This is my first time in California.
Rachel: Same!
Wes: I'm from the Bronx originally, and I agree. These shows have been an interesting vibe; very welcoming, which I appreciate. Even in New York you don't always get that, in my own city. But, you know, it might be different if I was a resident of the Bay.

MRR: I think you have an accurate read. As someone who's not from the Bay, living here, I definitely notice intentionality in spaces and at shows.
Cristy: We live in a shitty world. Being queer people of color going across the country do stuff is inherently this stressful, potentially dangerous thing. Queer people in airports...it's a lot to handle. It's worth it when we're here playing shows, but we can't help but be who we are. It's not like we sit down and script like, "What are are gonna politicize tonight?" It's like, "I woke up today, so I've got some shit to talk about." [*laughter*]

MRR: What brought Choked Up together?
Cristy: I've been writing songs and playing in bands and fronting bands since the mid-'90s, and I've always had this punk focus and trajectory of keeping it DIY. As opposed to my art, music has always felt like this sacred thing where I didn't even want people to ask me about it—just come to the show if you understand what's going on. I was very focused on this family ideal as far as bandmates, and playing with very specific kinds of musicians that are from my community and have the same exact life goals as me. Then the Homewreckers—my band of eight years—broke up in 2016, and I knew I wanted to do this new band differently. It was magical that you all just popped up; I wasn't even trying to start a queer band. When I first met Rachel, I was like, "Yo, we might play with some straight white dudes because I wanna play pop punk."
Rachel: And I was like, "Such is life. Here we go."
Cristy: Yeah, we were like, "Fuck it." But I feel very blessed, very grateful to play with these three. We all met each other in this organic way.
Rachel: Choked Up is my first band ever in life. I met Cristy when she spoke at a Women in Rock panel, it was very 1990s. Two things that she said stood out: Green Day, and how hard it is to put yourself out there and form a band when people either dismiss you or flake out on you. I knew I had to tell her how much I felt that, because I've tried to put a band together for a very long time, but just put it on the backburner for years. So, when I finally met Cristy, Homewreckers broke up a few months later, and she said she still wanted to write stuff and do a new project. I was like, "This is it!"

MRR: What was it like when you first met up to share songs with each other?
Cristy: I'm kind of a band mom. This is what I do. I've been writing songs with lyrics, melodies, and basic song structure forever. So when I start bands, I'm gonna bring that, hoping other folks contribute their part. Obviously I'm stoked if other people want to write songs. In the beginning, we tried out doing Rachel's songs, too, but suddenly the idea of being a band was legitimized. Rachel and I were like, "OK, now we need drummer and a bass player." We had this vision of what we wanted this to be—I knew it would work the second Rachel showed up to practice in a Boys t-shirt. We all love the same '90s sound, but we all have very different obsessions and focuses in terms of how we learned how to play and what we bring into the songs.
Rachel: It's a very interesting playlist in the car.
Cristy: We all like musical theater, though. We all meet at the Green Day musical.
Wes: This is not my first band. I've been playing drums for a long time, and I've been in bands for a long time. It's mostly because I was a weird high schooler with very few friends, and I think that's when you start playing music. Getting together in a group was a really cool project and social structure that I really took to. For Choked Up, Cristy and I had been in QPOC organizing scenes in New York for a while. I had admired Cristy's work, and always wondered what it'd be like to someday play music with her. We were adjacent to each other in similar communities. I think coming together from the QPOC organizing community in New York City, a lot of us have to be pretty punk to survive there. So, we just kind of naturally come together in that way.
Cristy: I made a post on Queer Exchange. It said something like, "Two lonely Latinx punks looking for our third." It was a magical gift that the original lineup was all Latinxs from New York City. Having that was this really weird foundation for me, having only played music with white folks. They were best friends and family, but there's just something when you can have this shared experience that is the point of your isolation your whole life. When Rachel and I first met, we were coming from such different places, but it felt like meeting my best friend in high school at the Green Day concert. We're both women of color, but we felt isolated from our cultural communities. I love finding each other through isolation, and coming together to make a beautiful thing.
Wes: I think there's a lot to be said for the networks of queer folks that went into the formation of the band but also that keep us going on tour. That's been the most important thing for me, networks of queer people trying to survive together, giving each other a chance to travel, do new things, meet new people, and share our music.
Cristy: By the time the bass player—an old friend—left, I felt like I raised my bar a little bit. I felt like we needed to have

a friend in the band, not just a sick bass player. Then Rose came in!

Rose: I also play bass in Koyt Far Dayn Fardakht, an anti-Zionist Yiddish punk band that's mostly trans women, so I already had that experience of collaborating around similar identities or politics. I was looking for a project that would be a little more active. I've always loved pop punk, but being queer or trans, at a certain point when you're growing up, it becomes really hard to engage with that world. It seemed amazing to have an opportunity to play that type of music in a non-hostile setting.

MRR: Let's talk about that. As a fellow lover of pop punk, I know it's a bold decision to make to play pop punk when you start a band.

Cristy: I just think the heart wants what it wants; it's not a decision. It's what I poop. It's what I vomit. I can't help it. But it's true...there was an era of not listening to pop punk, and it was following a very difficult time in my life that involved misogyny, abuse, and sexual assault in the punk scene. I quit bands that offended me, like the Nobodys, but also bands I deeply respected, like Ambition Mission. At that time, I felt like I needed to get away from pop punk—like in order to be a feminist and a musician and to be taken seriously, I needed to play a different genre of music. Until one day, when I felt stronger and older, someone put on Rancid, and my soul shot out of my face! I started writing songs again! I think it's important for me to keep doing this, to write the songs that come out of me. I definitely listen to a lot of '70s and '80s power pop, Latinx pop, musicals, and melody-driven music, and I do have feelings about pop punk institutions and men running shit and keeping the silence. But this is our first tour out here since the world has been changing and people are talking about healing from abuse in mainstream platforms. There are a lot of current bands I'm excited about, and it feels like maybe we're back in a magical haven of politicized pop punk??

Rachel: Feels like it, actually! Like we just walked into a whole other world.

Cristy: Yeah! I can't change what comes out of me. Last thing I'll say is that I know there are a lot of people in power, and people in bands, and bands in power that are rape apologists. I don't want to associate with them, but I don't feel scared to say my piece, interact with people who piss me off, and fight for my words. I don't feel afraid to do what I need to. Like, with the Homewreckers, we retreated to this queer feminist bubble—but even that has its imperfections. Our community is not immune to oppressive behavior. So now I'm like, "Fuck it! Let's do all the things!" It's awesome having each other and feeling safe. We're excited to do this for the rest of our lives. Who fucking knows what douchebags we'll deal with in the future, but I feel like as long as we hold on to our narratives and keep doing our thing, we'll can just take over the shitty institutions.

MRR: Warped Tour's over.

Cristy: Warped Tour's over!!

Rachel and Wes: Yeah!! [*clapping*]

Wes: Another dinosaur.

Cristy: Honestly, I love so many bands that were shooting to play Warped Tour, but it's like...are we all gonna have to do what War On Women did? Is that part of the trek to the top? I totally love and respect what they did—calling out the Dickies for violent humor on the last tour. But that's so much work and emotional labor for the sake of holding down an institution...And you all have this different world of pop punk...

Rose: We all came up in different punk eras.

Rachel: New Found Glory, Blink-182, and Green Day were my introduction to whatever pop punk was, from age seven on. I had no friends, so the music made up for that. Then, as I got older, my taste developed more towards metal, and I had my Metallica phase (which hasn't gone away). It was when I was thirteen that I realized I needed a guitar, and because of Metallica. Then I had a death metal phase, which I wish I was in California for, because all my favorite bands from that era were coming up then. But I never, ever stopped caring about pop punk. It was hard to find people to play with, because while I loved this heavier music, I just wanted to sing about feelings, if not dumb shit. When I was coming up in high school, there were a few Staten Island pop punk bands. For anyone unfamiliar with Staten Island: it's a horrible place, and it's a very red borough. All of the bands are these douchey bros, these teenagers

that feel so entitled to their time on stage with their weird inside jokes non-stop, isolating everybody who isn't their friend. Me being this shy, little, brown kid—one of four brown kids at these shows—I was like, "This sucks, this is shitty, I guess I won't do this." But as I started playing music more when I got older, I went back to pop punk. It felt like the best vehicle for me to do me. I have another band with Wes, called Gibbons, which started with the solo stuff I wrote when I first coming out of my little egg.

Cristy: We almost did those songs, but I was like, "No, there should be *more* bands fronted by us!"

Rachel: Yeah, and it wasn't like the songs wouldn't work for Choked Up, but they were my songs and I wanted to do them however my vision was. And I'm in another band called Universe Ignore Her, with two Staten Island vocalists who are also POC. My goal is to take those fucking spaces over. Along the lines of what Cristy said, it's like, "I'm uncomfortable and I don't wanna be here, but I'm gonna find a way to be comfortable. I'm not gonna wait for the door to open for me because it never will and I'm gonna have to open it myself." It's a slow climb, but we want Staten Island to be more inclusive to everybody.

Wes: The stuff folks are talking about is a testament to what happens when something becomes an industry, whatever discipline, whether it's art or something outside of art. The types of people, bodies, and conversations that are marketable are who get the resources. People just throw resources at them. It's easy to pinpoint throughout history where women, queer people, and people of color have been totally overlooked by people with tons of resources. Inevitably, they give the resources to those who are marketable...

Cristy: And easier to deal with...

Wes: Yeah, and these folks get famous, and then that's the face, the representation of the pop punk musician. They all look the same because that's what marketable. It's not a coincidence. We invented rock music, we invented punk, we invented all this shit, because it's about people with hard fucking lives who don't get resources just for nothing, just for existing. Quite the opposite! And we don't show up in the documentaries, even though we were there. It's important to me to point out how intentional these choices are on the part of industry, people with resources, and stolen wealth. I'm not surprised at all that it's so hard for us to get resources from these people who stand to lose a lot from our message, you know? Oppressing people so that they don't retaliate against the things they've done. So much happens away from the public eye. That's how erasure happens, and we talk a lot about erasure of queer people, queer people of color, women, people who invented the genre. That's something that I'm keeping in mind, and trying to really watch for when those things are happening to us. When it starts with small compromises on our identities, small compromises on things we can and can't say. When it turns into, like, "Y'all couldn't get it together to depoliticize yourselves and make yourselves a little prettier, so you gotta go. You can't play this fest, you can't get these resources, you can't get thousands of bucks for not even knowing how to play your instrument." The places we feel safest are the places that stuff just doesn't happen, where people have proven to us that they care about taking care of each other. For myself, being a queer person of color and a musician, that's something I'm looking out for when building community and giving myself so fully to community—seeing people's ethics around how to treat each other.

MRR: Something you said at your San Francisco show stood out to me. You have your demo, but you said you also have all

these new songs that you haven't recorded yet. It made me think about the pressure of the music industry, even within punk, to be productive, record, and engage with this set of rules that was created by a marketing department.

Rachel: Yeah, which is changing all the time!

Cristy: And social media taking over! I'm old, I don't understand social media!

Rachel: We've talked about how to use Instagram, since Facebook is nearly irrelevant at this point. Like, we're not going to pay for ads.

Cristy: I've paid for ads, and they work...so annoying and fucked up!

Rachel: It's just fucked up that with Instagram, Snapchat, and shit, you don't even have to post about things that you're getting ready to do, like recording or playing a show or going on tour. You can just post a picture of you sitting in a chair with a neat font underneath saying something irrelevant. It's weird that it's what bands do these days to keep people's attention, to actively be posting shit even if it has nothing to do with being productive with band things.

Cristy: It's like just showing the world you exist.

Rose: And when you're marginalized people, too, that kind of visibility isn't always something that you want. It's really uncomfortable being forced to present yourself in a certain way in order to be consumed by the communities that you're trying to reach.

Wes: Constantly consumed.

Cristy: Yeah. It's like, we all want private lives for different reasons. Rose isn't even on Instagram; she's the punkest.

Rose: But then it's like, I can't contribute to the labor of producing ourselves for the internet. Those choices have consequences in a really horrible way.

Cristy: I got rid of all social media in 2013, and it was amazing for my mental health. I was like, "I love my work. I'm going to connect to my ancestral magic. My band is falling apart, but I'll live! I'm going to finish my tarot card deck and go to grad school!" And I did it all! Near the end of grad school, I realized I had to do a Kickstarter for the tarot deck because it was too intersectional for funding...That project was this weird thing where I *knew* it could have a lot of impact and be successful, I just needed social media to fundraise for it and sell it.

MRR: Yeah, it's gross! Anyway, I really appreciate the things you say between songs, especially talking about trauma, relationships, and the idea of "no such thing as damaged goods."

Cristy: Yeah! I love feelings. As you all know, I love bands like Green Day, Crimpshrine, and Tilt. They weren't specifically talking about politics, like Rancid songs that are about homelessness or drug abuse. They were talking about inherently political feelings—isolation, depression. That's what's always influenced my song writing, these bands that were writing about feelings, survival, and love songs that didn't really sound like love songs. I related to these songs that were about falling in love, but it being laced with so much trauma. Before sexual assault trauma, the songs I was writing were fun, storytelling like Pinhead Gunpowder songs. After experiencing trauma, I started writing angry punk songs, and then it turned into a mix of the angry punk songs and love songs. The Homewreckers had a lot of songs that were about, like, loving someone when you can't really be in their life because of trauma, mental health, distance—not because they're not calling you. There were a lot of songs about my experience as a Cubana, songs about gentrification, but they're all love songs. It's like, here's a song about trying to be in love and enjoy a human while your city is falling apart. Choked Up songs are similar, too. A lot of the songs are like, "You're really cute, and you're staring at me, and I think we like each other, but we're both very depressed so how do we do this?" Knock on wood, I don't have anything traumatic going on right now, so I've been articulating past experiences. Of course there are traumas we'll all be processing for the rest of our lives, but I feel like I've written so much about those traumas that now I'm excited to write about engaging in love and joy, but feeling fucked up while doing so. And about having magical connections with people who are totally inaccessible but still give you life. And about how maybe it's not really about fucking and having a partner, but about experiencing love. A lot of the songs are about that, too: the concept of loving versus having someone to snuggle with. The songs have a lot of the same themes. I still hate the government, I hate having to deal with this world as an abuse survivor, but writing songs about healing from trauma is just going to happen. Even if I write a song about liking someone, it's probably going to be a little morbid.

Wes: For me, in terms of content and what's read as political or not, I got into pop punk through early 2000s stuff like Fall Out Boy, the Used, My Chemical Romance, etc. One of the things that I loved about *Under the Cork Tree*—the first Fall Out Boy album I interacted with—was that it was all about being a loser, not being able to get your shit together, and not being able to participate in patriarchy in the right ways. Even though it was a bunch of white dudes, I interpreted it as an album for sad trans boy feels, you know? Like, not being able to participate in patriarchy because, say, you can't be with the prettiest girl in school, which is a stupid idea, but it's inherently political. You've got all that stuff about patriarchy, racism, and ableism. But I feel like queer people have been doing this forever—reading into the stuff they've appropriated from us in the music they get paid for. Doing that helped me continue to own the genre and content, and it's been interesting interacting with that. There are some songs that I feel have to do with being a man and experiencing sexual assault and not having anyone take you seriously or think that's a bad thing. It's interesting seeing the bands that straddle the line between talking about real shit like de-internalizing patriarchy, or being a man who's experienced sexual assault, with also being super misogynistic by blaming women for everything bad that's happened to them. For me, it's been walking a thin line between the people we have to represent us and the actual real things that they're talking about. Anyway, *Under the Cork Tree* is my sad trans boy middle school anthem.

Cristy: My sad pansexual anthem is *Coming Clean* by Green Day.

Rachel: On the topic of not being able getting your shit together and being a hot mess, my album would be *Commit This to Memory* by Motion City Soundtrack. That shit made me be like, "Fuck New Found Glory!" They helped me work through the idea of just feeling like you don't deserve to be happy. You can have whatever community, you have whatever support systems and coping mechanisms, but you just don't know how to enjoy what you deserve to enjoy. I

go through that on a daily basis. I struggle with being across the country while my family is dealing with their lives. I'm on vacation right now while shit is falling apart and the world is burning. It's these strange parallels but you don't not deserve to be happy. That's what I take from those Motion City Soundtrack songs, and what I hope people interpret from our songs. We're about honoring your fucking soul, and you deserve to honor what you have, whatever that may be.

Rose: I'll share a pop punk story. I grew up playing violin, listening to bands like Yellowcard—the pop punk violin thing. I'm from a Chicago suburb with a lot of conservative Christian kids, and my first band experience was playing violin in a weird pop punk / emo group with some of them. Eventually they kicked me out and replaced me with a less faggy, less Jewish violinist. So pop punk has some emotional resonance for me. And I feel like a lot of the musicians that Wes was talking about—people like Gerard Way or Pete Wentz—they were told to be boys growing up, but were unable to perform masculinity in quite the right ways. That's something I obviously identify with a lot, too, and I think I bring that with me into my role in Choked Up.

Mia: I grew up in Torrance, a part of LA. I really like what Rose is saying about Yellowcard, because I love Yellowcard. I appreciate the wording that Wes used earlier about how all these white, hetero, cis, toxic masculine bands that we grew up perpetuate patriarchy in a certain way, but they also speak to experiences of failing to participate in patriarchy in a successful way. This whole conversation about representation in pop punk just makes me laugh sometimes, because none of the kids I grew up with listening to pop punk were white. I grew up in a community that was 75% Asian, and that's just Asian: Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Burmese, Vietnamese, Taiwanese. On top of that, another 10% Latinx people. There was a sprinkling of white kids in there, but we were all kids of color listening to this music. Alkaline Trio, Green Day, Yellowcard, Rancid, they were all introduced to me by people of color. I wasn't hanging out with white boys who introduced this into my life, it was people of color recognizing struggle and oppression within each other, and this was just the language we had. Since moving to New York is when I've seen the most white boy bands. Specifically, about how Wes was talking about failing to participate in patriarchy in a certain way, I myself am an Asian person, and growing up in a community of so many Asian young men of all different ethnicities and races, pop punk was so precious to us because of that message. It tied so well with how these young men were experiencing racial oppression through the emasculation of their own identities. I grew up in a high school where people would say, "You're so gay—you're Asian." Even though 75% of the school was Asian kids, that was still the mentality and the idea of how we were supposed to be treated and treat each other. Imagine that you go to Buddhist temple on Saturday morning, you go to violin practice, after school you go to Kumon, and late at night you lay in bed crying listening to Yellowcard because that's the thing that speaks to all attempts to overcome oppression, which still fails at a certain point. That failure needs some sort of recognition. Even though all of the faces of the bands were white boys, they were talking about the experiences of people of color, women, and queer people. And they get paid for it! Also, hi, I'm Mia, I'm the roadie for Choked Up.

MRR: Thank you for chiming in, Mia!

Mia: Yeah! I want to give them space to talk, but I just want to say I wouldn't just hop in the van with any band. The content of Cristy's songs means a lot to me! During your set, when you say things like, "This is a song about finding isolation," or, "This is a song for all the queer people of color," it means a lot.

Cristy: Aw, yeah! "Lomes Y Chisme" is about finding queer femmes of color community. It also relates to finding queer people at all. I'm from Miami, and I grew up in a Latinx punk scene. All my best friends who I went to shows with, wrote zines with, played music with, we were all Latinx punks doing our thing and empowering each other. But I wanted queer and feminist community really badly. There's an amazing activist / punk community in Miami that's fluctuated over the years, but during my time in 1999 I couldn't find it. I thought everyone was in the Bay. Eventually I made my way up to New York—my friends understood I needed to go be a unicorn somewhere. Miami is a red city, although it's predominantly Spanish-speaking and very mixed, so you get in the punk scene and it's even more mixed, as punk is inherently about welcoming our differences. So I did meet lots of different people from different backgrounds...but I ended up in a very bro-y pop punk scene that I felt very ugly and wrong in, despite it being Latinx. The scene seemed welcoming to jocks and I didn't know how to live. Participating in shows felt really hard, even though there was this life of POC punk and comfort there. So, "Lomes Y Chisme" is about finally seeing yourself in your cultural community.

Mia: When I listen to that song with you all every night, it's beautiful to me in many ways because you all were the band that I was waiting for as a kid. Every time I hear that song, I still get a little choked up *[laughter]* from watching the audience listen to it, because so much of that song resonates with the idea that we've gone through all that, too, and we're still here.

Cristy: Yeah, let's cry! Let's get choked up!

chokedup.bandcamp.com

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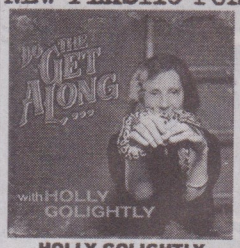

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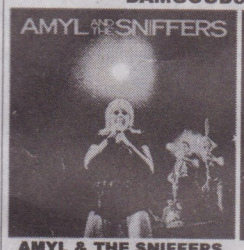

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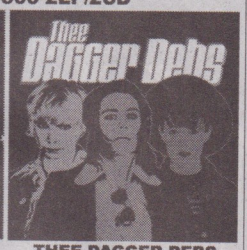

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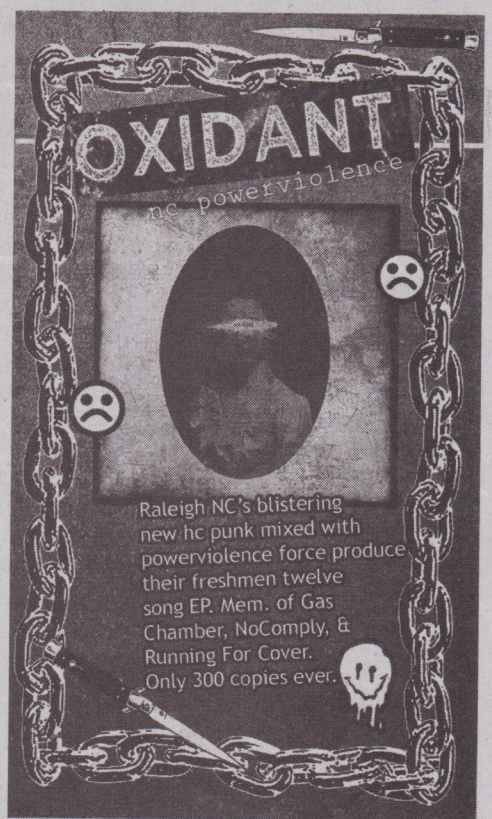

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ANCIENT FILTH

Boston's Ancient Filth has been a band for eight years, an eternity in punk time. They recently sat down with Shawnecee Schneider to discuss their recent Mexico tour, their process of translating their high energy live shows into recordings, and how punk can have an effect on the world.

Photos By Angela Owens, Chaba Mendizábal Ramirez, Joseph Mauro, Jon Dirkes and Ben Stas / Noise Floor Photography

MRR: You guys have such a rippin' aesthetic and sound! I remember seeing you in a scummy basement in Providence years ago and buying every piece of merch you had! Who does all your art? And why is it so damn cool?
Frank: We do all the art ourselves.
Matt: Mostly Frank, but it's collaborative. Jon and Cory do some too. Jon does a lot of the posters and T-shirts.
Frank: Cory designed our last record, he also silk screened all the covers. We get a lot of our inspiration from european sci-fi comic artists like Moebius.
Jon: Mmmhmm [*nods in satisfied agreement*].
Cory: Frank is a wizard with design and Photoshop. That helps a lot when getting Jon's drawings from the sketch pad to the final product. Same with my collages. My inspiration also comes from '90s crusty cut'n'paste collage. Think dystopia (death, destruction, etc...).

MRR: What is Boston punk? What is your sound within the Boston punk scene? Are you influenced by the scene and its history?
Frank: Jerry's Kids.
Matt: The first album.
Frank: No, no, the second album! [*laughter*]
Jon: Don't write that.
Matt: We've always been into Boston punk and hardcore bands. We are influenced by Proletariat, the Freeze, Jerry's Kids. We try not to fit into any specific mold though. We don't sound like a lot of current Boston punk. We like a lot of Italian punk too.
Cory: Fast hardcore is not popular at the moment. Ten years ago it was, though! That I think is a testament to how much we love it. Not too many people care, but we're still doing what we love regardless!
Jon: Yeah our tastes in music are pretty eclectic. We draw from a lot of different sources.

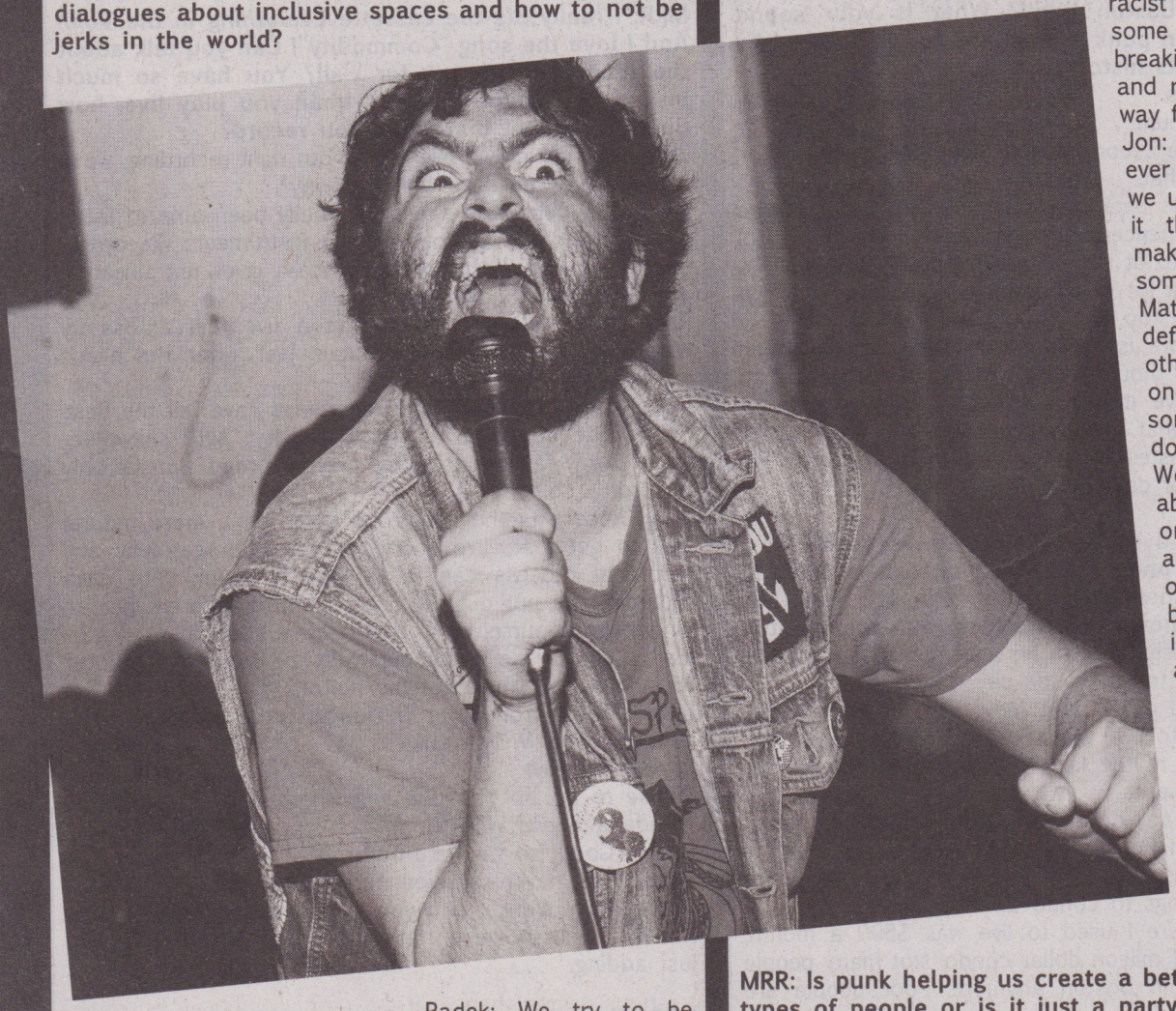
MRR: How is it living in Boston, the seventh most segregated city, one of the most expensive cities in the country...is there any of the city left? How has it changed and how does it affect your community?
Radek: You definitely need to be resourceful and creative to figure out how to live in the city.
Jon: Yeah, I could never have moved to Boston unless I had a free place to live, which was a friend's closet. And now I live in one of the last few affordable places in a rapidly gentrifying area.
Matt: Well, it's already done. Every month the rents go up. There's a huge eviction problem in the city.
Radek: And because the rents are going up, owners are selling their buildings to condo developers.
Matt: A place where I used to live was $500 a month, and now it's a half million dollar condo. Not many people from Boston live in Boston anymore. Poor people are being pushed out.
Jon: It's mostly students and doctors and tech. My next move will probably be away. There's a lot less punk houses and show spaces because it's too expensive and nobody wants to pay that much to live in squalor.
Matt: There's a lot less of a youth culture. There used to be local people hanging out in the city and going to punk shows, but now it's a lot more college kids.
Jon: I think social media destroyed a lot of that hanging out too, like hanging out and finding out where shows were gonna be.
Radek: You'd have to go out to find out what's going on. Like you'd go to a show and get flyers for the next one, whereas now you can go online and know everything and then decide whether you want to go.
Jon: Punk is a Facebook group.
Frank: Cory moved to down to Providence because it's so expensive here.
Cory: I needed a change from the yearly influx of college kids. Also living in a three bedroom with five people each paying $500 a month...it got old, I needed a change. Providence has a much more diverse scene and culture and I've learned *a lot* from the people in that scene. There a lot of older punks and weirdos that frequent the shows in PVD, and I love that.

MRR: I really dig the cassette *Everything in the Void*! And I love the song "Commodity"! Can you talk about the recording process for y'all? You have so much insane and chaotic energy when you play live, how do you channel that when you record?
Jon: I don't think we ever come out right recording, we're a live band. You don't feel that way?
Frank: No, because we've never really been able to listen to our band live without playing instruments. Recording is so hard and the recording process gives me anxiety.
Jon: Well, that's how I feel.
Radek: We definitely try to get a live feel across by recording live. We do the vocals last, after the music is done.
Jon: I think the last couple recordings have felt the best.
Frank: The song we recorded for that *MRR* shitworker comp is my favorite thing we ever recorded. But it's only one song, so...
Cory: Recording the songs live gives us a more natural way to get that "live energy" across. But certainly any recording process can be a little stressful. With each recording we put out, we record with a different person or just do it ourselves in the practice space.
Matt: Can I make a comment? In the form of a quote? "Button button who's got the button?"
Radek: That's from Alice in Wonderland.
Matt: It's from Willy Wonka.
Radek: No way!
[*Pause to go on YouTube and watch clips from* Alice in Wonderland *and* Willy Wonka]
Radek: Good, so we were both right.
Matt: Well I never said you were wrong, I just said that it was in Willy Wonka, and you said it wasn't.
Radek: So then we're not both right. You're right, I'm just adding.

MRR: You guys have been a band for eight years! That's a super long time in the punk scene. How do you work through stagnant periods and how do you stay inspired? Does punk inspire you? How do you support each other?
Radek: We try a weekly practice schedule no matter what. Doesn't always work out that way, but we try to maintain some kind of consistency.

Frank: The honest answer is that even when we don't feel like it, we still slog through.
Matt: Even when we're not feeling inspired, we still try to get together and play through it.
Cory: There's certainly some practices where everyone's energy is low and we have to push through. The following practice is usually the opposite, though. I feel like we're into slightly different styles of music and punk, so we're always coming to the table from a slightly different place musically.
Frank: We're always sharing new music with each other.
Matt: We talk with each other a lot, about films, politics, comic books, always looking to bring those influences into our music.

MRR: Can you talk to me about your view on feminism and toxic masculinity being a band made up entirely of cis white males? Do y'all have dialogues about inclusive spaces and how to not be jerks in the world?



Radek: We try to be very aware of the places we play and the bands we play with because we don't want to contribute to anything problematic.
Frank: Yeah, this is something we talk about a lot as a band.
Jon: We play in a band that continuously challenges us to think about our own views and how to have a better impact on those around us.
Matt: I consider myself an intersectional feminist, and that does not exempt me or any of us from having toxic views. I feel that because I'm in this society I have views that are toxic, and I've probably done things that are toxic as well. But it's acknowledging these things and thinking of ways to change and be accountable for my actions. I've been reading a lot of bell hooks recently, and the more I read the better my understanding is and I try to include that understanding in my lyrics and the ethos, and I want to try to practice what I preach.
Cory: I take a lot away from examining our broken system and try every day to see what's wrong and live my life in opposition of those wrongful ideas. I would hope that this would be in every punk's rule book. But like Matt said, we reflect our society whether we like it or not because we're raised in it. A racist or sexist society means that each and every person in this society is racist or sexist in this some way, and I feel breaking that down and resisting it is the way forward.
Jon: I suppose if we ever make mistakes, we usually talk about it then. I definitely make mistakes sometimes.
Matt: Yeah, we definitely call each other out when one of us is doing something that doesn't seem right. We had a talk about feminism on our last tour and it got kind of intense. The biggest thing is about being accountable and not being afraid to be wrong, but when you are wrong to be accountable for your actions. And maybe take a step back and listen.

MRR: Is punk helping us create a better world for all types of people or is it just a party for outcasts to have a good time?
Radek: Sometimes people maybe have a narrow view that it's just a party.
Jon: It does feel sometimes like it's just a party, but not in a bad way. It depends on who you're around and where you want to be.
Cory: I think for young punks it's party time, then you

grow up and take a look at the world around you, how you can affect it, and what you can do to change it.
Matt: I think punk is a place where outcasts (people who don't fit into the mainstream) can have somewhere to go where they feel they have a sense of safety and community. Because we live in a toxic world, people who are hurt might tend to use drugs and alcohol and partying as way to escape. So that is helping to make a space or community. But that can sometimes be toxic as well because we're coming from such a fucked up place.
Jon: I feel like there's less healing than there should be.
Matt: But there's also a lot of great stuff going on, great support that has come in the wake of a lack of support. A lot of people helping each other. Doesn't mean there shouldn't be more. I think there should be more real support

We can say fuck the world, but do we really have to fuck ourselves too?

We use these coping mechanisms of drugs and alcohol, or hardline abstinence of these things to escape, but the real reason we do this is that there's a lack of self-love. I think the party and creating a better world can be the same thing, when it's not self-destructive. It saves people's lives, but it's also destroyed them.
Jon: It's a good stepping stone out of mainstream culture.
Matt: But I think what were once outcasts are now the new "in" group. People who don't dress punk come to a punk show and people don't talk to them. When we tour I feel the most included. I see people doing amazing things and it really renews my faith in punk.
Jon: I feel the same way.

MRR: How was tour in Mexico? What was it like coming from the Boston scene and playing another country?
Jon: Tour was amazing and the people were great everywhere, very welcoming.
Cory: Mexico was amazing! The people are so nice. I can't wait to go back!
Radek: It's definitely a different atmosphere than Boston.
Frank: A different hemisphere, even.
Jon: It was refreshing.

Matt: I love Mexico, the culture, the people, the food, everything, and the fucking punk.
Frank: Yeah the punks there are the best, everyone is super nice and super helpful. We played an awesome

show in Toluca, shout out to Toluca Mosh! Where they made us dinner at like 3 AM, and I'm talkin' a full spread—
Matt: Vegan chorizo!
Cory: So much good vegan food the whole trip! I was pumped. Shout out to Syd for hooking me up with the great recommendations and all the help.
Frank: But the show was the best part, the punk community there was so strong and people actually seemed to know each other and want to be together and wanted to know us.
Matt: They were excited there was a touring band.
Jon: People approached us right away.
Frank: I feel like the punk scene down there is more alive and relevant because they are feeling the effects of all the things punk bands sing about in a more serious degree than what the typical American white-dude hardcore guy feels.
Jon: Yeah, Roger recommended some stuff we should read about the situation down there, like *Narcoland* and *Drug War Capitalism*. We learned a lot from just talking to people.
Cory: It was very eye opening to come from a place of privilege and see how other people and punks are living and dealing in there own fucked up system. I think it was

amazing that we got to tour with Ojo Por Ojo (buy their record! it's so fucking good!) and had an amazing host, Roger, who helped us with the lay of the land. We were and are incredibly grateful that it happened.

MRR: Who were some of you favorite bands you saw there? And who were some of your favorite folks you met?
Jon: Roger, our host, was great.
Cory: Roger! Yecatl! Chaba! Mico! Chamaz! Gabriel! Hi! See y'all soon!
Radek: We played all our shows with Ojo por Ojo, they were a lot of fun.
Matt: Insolencia and Ojo Por Ojo were awesome! Shout out to Narcoestado, they are amazing!
Cory: They were so good live, and great people too.
Jon: They took us around and showed us some cool places in Guadalajara, we visited an old church and got some great food.
Matt: And went to an awesome underground goth club! Dude, this goth club felt like a basement in Spain in the '90s playing awesome industrial music.
Cory: It was like right out of the movie *Blade*. Also that night our driver Gabriel took acid and stayed up all night dancing, then met up with us in the morning and drove us back to DF...it was like a six hour drive! He rules!
Radek: I was sleeping on a bus to Mexico City.
Jon: Yeah, you missed it.
Matt: A couple years ago, I was planning on going to Mexico and around the same time Frank got an email from Roger, who owns a record store in Mexico City. He asked if he could get our records. So Frank said I was coming down there anyway and I could bring them with me. Roger said that would be great, plus I could see his band Narcoestado play. When I was there I went and saw Narcoestado play two shows and he let me stay at his house. I went to his record store, it was awesome, and he asked if Ancient Filth ever wanted to play a show in Mexico. I said I'd been waiting for that my whole life! And then a year later we made it happen. We toured with Ojo Por Ojo and Yecatl Peña booked us three awesome shows. It was an amazing experience. All the bands we played with were awesome.
Frank: Shout out to Chaba in Guadalajara, thanks for booking us a sweet rooftop show. We played two rooftop shows in Mexico, that shit never happens here.

MRR: Any new music coming out? Any tours on the horizon?
Frank: Yeah, we just put out a rough tape for the Mexico tour, and we're trying to put together a full LP.
Matt: Our first vinyl LP! We've only released 7"s and tapes in the past.
Radek: We have a bunch of songs we have to pick through that we're working on.
Matt: And hopefully a split with Ojo Por Ojo?
Frank: We put our records out ourselves, but it'd be great to have help with more distribution.
Matt: If anyone wants to help out, we'll send you our Mexico tour tape! We want to tour more, we've always wanted to do Europe. After Mexico, we'd love to go to more countries...Colombia?
Cory: Get me out of this shithole!

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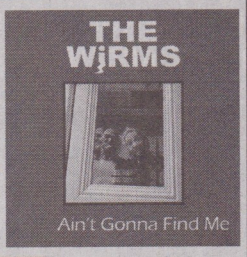

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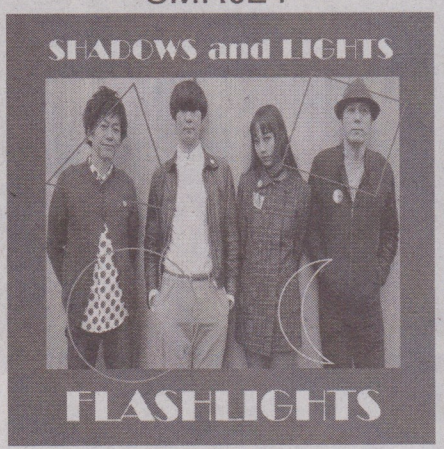

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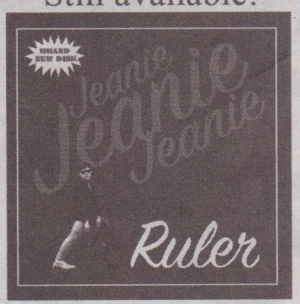

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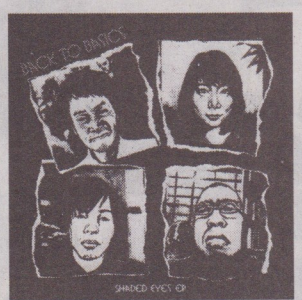

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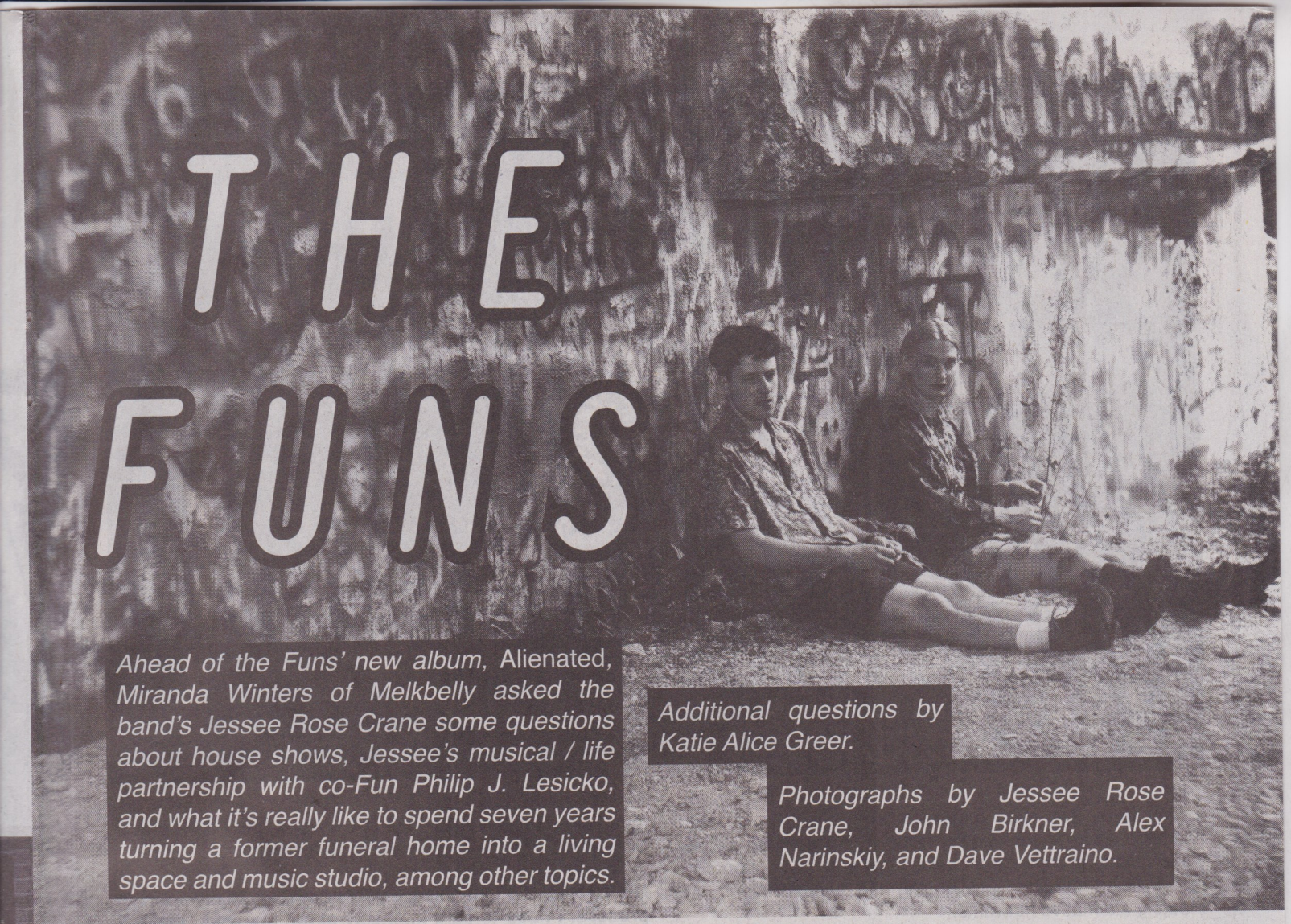


THE FUNS

Ahead of the Funs' new album, Alienated, *Miranda Winters of Melkbelly asked the band's Jessee Rose Crane some questions about house shows, Jessee's musical / life partnership with co-Fun Philip J. Lesicko, and what it's really like to spend seven years turning a former funeral home into a living space and music studio, among other topics.*

Additional questions by Katie Alice Greer.

Photographs by Jessee Rose Crane, John Birkner, Alex Narinskiy, and Dave Vettraino.

MRR: Can you introduce yourself? Where do you live and what do you do?
My name is Jessee Rose Crane. I play drums and guitar in the Funs. I live in an artist and musician's residency called Rose Raft I built in New Douglas, Illinois. It's a recording studio, independent label (Manic Static), art gallery, and work space, all shoved into a formerly abandoned funeral home surrounded by soy and corn.

MRR: Who is Philip J. Lesicko?
Philip is my BFF. When I met him, he chained smoked cigs, didn't speak, couldn't grow facial hair, and his cheeks were real pink. We could share shirts because we were the same size. I used to give him piggy back rides on the magic, frozen beaches in Rogers Park [Chicago]. We didn't feel cold because we were manic and frightened by how much we fell in love. We never slept. Still don't. Philip and I make reverberations together on a telepathic level. We got married on our front porch and promised to support each other creatively for the rest of our lives, to live in this big old orange brick house, to nurture others, and make art until we die.

MRR: How long have you been making music?
I started playing violin when I when I was eight, and I spent hours messing around. I wouldn't even call it practice, because I wasn't practicing that much. I was just playing. There is joy in play that is important to never lose. I eventually quit because I was in orchestra for years, and creativity isn't generally rewarded in that setting. It got very boring and frustrating. I wanted to write my own music but my teachers were like, "No. No. You can't do that yet. You've got to play these old dead guy songs the same way every time." So I quit when I was teenager, shaved my head, and started playing bass in a radical punk band. It was the right thing to do. The first song I learned on bass was "Gigantic" when I was twelve, and from that moment in my bunk bed I've been writing songs ever since.

MRR: You're a visual artist as well as an audio one. What do you make, and what is its relationship (if any) to the sounds / songs you create?
Oh, wow, there is a ton of relationship. I don't separate the two. They are inextricable. The art informs the music and music makes the art and writing. A lot of artists operate this way, like Pipilotti Rist or Mark Mothersbaugh. It's not just music, it's a whole tiny universe to live in. I make sculptures that create sounds and sounds that support forms. It's a unified aesthetic. I just made a video for the song "Enemy" on our new record *Alienated* that was recorded beautifully by our dear one, Dave Vettraino at Rose Raft. I wrote "Enemy" on guitar and then I sculpted an eight-foot alien head to get a lot of the shots

for the video. The alien speaks to being a weirdo, or misfit, and embracing it, really celebrating it. I'm making my own world, and it all comes from using what you have, supporting marginalized peoples, challenging the establishment, and creating alternative networks.

MRR: How do the Funs write a song?
I'll write a song and show it to Philip, or he'll write something and show it to me. Whoever writes the song primarily has the strongest input on its overall direction but we do shape things together. We fight *a lot* less then we used to. We've had to work at that with focused and intentional discipline more than the actual music but it's worth it. We are both wickedly intense individuals and push each other to be better humans. Fight with meaning. Find your truth. Speak your truth. Keep seeking.

MRR: You play both the guitar and drums like a goddamn champ. Which is your preferred instrument and why?
Hmm, that is tough. I have different forms of joy from both. I love sitting and playing guitar or bass by myself and the magic tingly sensation when the song comes and it feels like taking smiley face drugs. It's something to live for, and it's just for me before putting out into the world which can be a raw experience. Playing in a band is beautiful too. It's beautiful to make sounds with another being and have them complement and contemplate each other. It is a unique form of bonding and connection, and hopefully it's something that can be shared and received in a genuine way. Every time I step on a stage, I put everything out there good or bad. Playing the drums exorcises my demons and feels damn good. I am very much a person that marches to their own beat. I love simple, repetitive, lovely rhythm. I prefer making things up and remaining enthusiastically different. I put my whole self into making, but at the same time I don't give a fuck, which is the balance I need to be functional.

MRR: I also find that balance very necessary to my creative process. I need to care intensely about my work, make it something I'm passionate about, but I'm also like "lol fuck, I'm gonna die one day, I don't need to be an obsessive freak about this, it's not *that* important." Do you ever think about mortality much, in this way or in some other sense, and does it inform much of your creative process? I mean, y'all do live and create in a former funeral home.
I keep death in my pocket.

I take comfort in the fact that the earth will be destroyed by our sun one day. It gives me peace. It takes embracing your mortality to live well. I do like to think about someone listening to a song we made or reading this zine 50 years after I'm dead and still feeling a connection. But at the same time, I'm OK with disappearing. I'm OK with being forgotten. I don't believe children are in the cards for me. Philip and I talk about giving this house to a young artist after we're gone to keep the place going a bit longer, but I'm not holding my breath. Philip's parents are funeral directors in a small town, so as long as I've known him, he's had a dark passion for creating that's ramped into overdrive. All of our lyrics are about processing life, death, loss, and bonding. I'm grateful for my food, my home, my relationships, my band, John Birkner. Ultimately, you should be fulfilled by how you spend your time, or what the fuck are you doing?

MRR: How does your music partnership with Philip work? How is it different than your solo efforts?
It works because we work on it. It takes consistent care. I don't have any official solo recordings yet. Songs I write usually

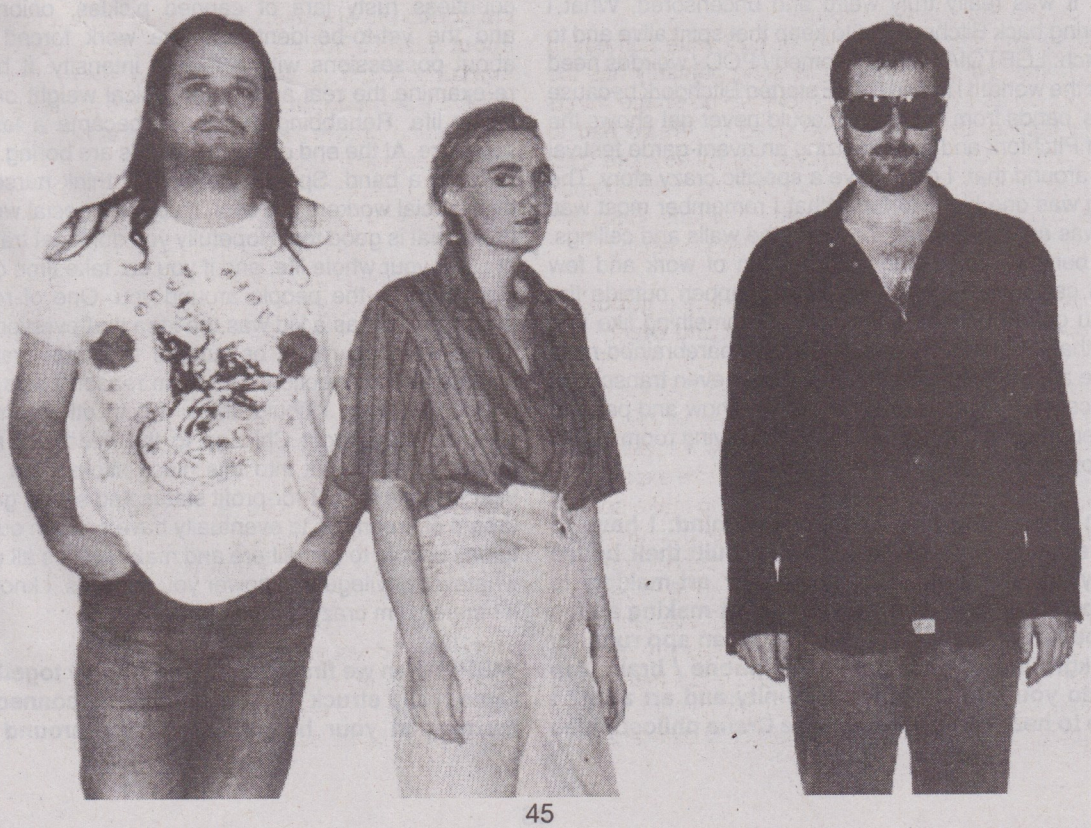
get absorbed into the Funs or Swear Beam. I have a lot of in between sounds I'd like to put on tape sometime, but I can barely keep up with documenting everything right now so we'll see. As much as the Funs, is a collaboration I feel like I have a lot of autonomy and control, so there's no drive for me to "go solo" right now. Maybe someday when Philip refuses to leave the house. (Legitimate growing concern.) The Funs and Rose Raft and art are all parts of the same atom.

MRR: You produce an impressive amount of material. How do you do it, Jessee Rose?

I write a song almost every time I sit and play the guitar. Most of them are one-offs that get lost to the ethereal ether. I hear a lot of music in my head. It's meditative and conditioned. Things I see have sounds to them. As soon as you become too aware of making, it becomes poison to creating. Independence makes freedom. I don't want to think about what others will think or who my audience is or if this will this sell. That shit waters creativity down like a glacier melting and this once pristine glowing blue and untouchable thing is gone for good. For me, it's all art all the time. I see a pile of sawdust and I'm like I can make that into a wolf swallowing the moon. (literally did that) I pour glue on the floor naked because I'm tired of washing glue stained clothes and it's better to just take a bath. While I'm in the bath I sing songs and take pictures of the tiny bubbles that bond to my body hair. These strange impulses make me happy, so I protect them. You have to protect that stuff and never let it get buried under the Hopelessly Mundane Regurgitated Bullshit. I am very fortunate. We've been able to build our Malibu Dream-funeral home-freakscapetopia out of other people's trash. I can walk downstairs and play music any time, and that fact alone has a lot to do with me making so much right now. I can record myself and have it sound how it is in my head. It's still a relatively new feeling, and It's surreal. I am so fucking grateful that I will never have to go to a cold, cement, beer soaked practice space with trashed dude bros lurking about lonely stairwells ever again. That shit affects me way too much. Bums me out. Burns me out. Scares me. Space is sacred. I moved to the country so I can afford to live how I want. There are no distractions here just stars and satiating sunsets that look like melting gold butter. There is nothing to do but make art.

MRR: I don't remember the source, but I remember reading an interview where the subject was postulating something like, "the secret to geniuses is that they are just making stuff all the time, constant output, but they're expert self-editors." How does the editorial process interact with your work?

Mike Montgomery, who recorded side B of our record *Is a Cult* at his studio Candyland, said to me, "You're oozing creativity and just trying to keep up," and his remark stuck with me because I feel that way. It's manic. It's obsessive. It's constant.. People create in different ways. Some people need to plan and to sketch and execute that plan perfectly. I need to flow, to space, and zone out in a stream of consciousness. Then I go back and tweak and refine. Since we record everything analog at home with no deadline. It's important impose our own limits. Philip will spend 30 hours mixing one song while I'm yelling, "it's done!" There is such a thing as over analysis. It's a balance between making something that comes from tapping into a free and real and raw part of myself then refining it but not picking at it to death. Like a scab. You got to let it grow. You got to let it heal. You can over work things and in my experience the second or third version is better than the 20th. Especially with recording because you can hear the life in it. The energy translates. It comes through. I teach freshman college art classes, and something I tell my students all the time is to loosen up and make intuitively, then come back and refine, but never beat it



to death. It's crazy to teach that but for so many people simply *feeling* is a challenge.

MRR: What is your favorite album?
Dove. EVEL. The Bills. CLUE. (These are killer bands from Indiana, not an album!)

MRR: Do you like to tour?
Yes, I love it, but that means touring my way, which means I take my time and put together something beautiful. Something that is built by me and Philip and friends and artists. It means not playing shows back to back to back. It means no to playing in front of vinyl printed alcohol ads or during daylight because I hate it. Being in a band can be more than being in a bar then driving, being in a club then driving. Stage, van, party, blah blah, *no*. It can be spending time in a place and being present in the world rather than existing in bars and cars and gas stations and stages. It's fleeting. It means living outside of a system built on the greatest monetary gain only. It's not worth it to me otherwise. Too much experience gets compromised. The music industry is a black hole. Stay bright. Burn bright. You got to crush that shit into gold like a dying star.

MRR: Greatest show you've ever played?
Every house show. Bring back Bitchpork!

MRR: Having never experienced Bitchpork but regularly hearing people wax nostalgic about how epic it was (really did sound epic), I'd love to hear more about this music festival. Got any good stories?
Philip and I played Bitchpork I in 2009 as Dinosaurs in Outerspace. It was the year Times New Viking played. Philip and I have always loved their lyrics. That year, the shows were in a big warehouse I think they called The Future, with old wooden floors, where a bunch of weirdo artists lived in lofted beds. What I liked about Bitchpork is that it was alternative-alternative. It was really truly weird and uncensored. What I mean by "bring back Bitchpork" is to keep that spirit alive and to pass the torch. LGBTQIA / Black / women / POC / weirdos need to take over the world!!! I'm told CAVE started Bitchpork because their friends' bands from out of town could never get shows the weekend of Pitchfork and so organizing an avant-garde festival was a way around that. I don't have a specific crazy story. The whole thing was one big acid trip. What I remember most was that there was art everywhere. Covering the walls and ceilings. The ethos behind it is inspiring. With a ton of work and few people you can make a lot of big things happen outside the system. You gotta dream. It's the spirit of something like that happening that I'll always be attracted to. The harebrained-ness of it. Its core absurdness is what made it ever even transpire in the first place. Make your existential puppet show and perform it to whoever you can get to show up to your living room. Make whatever you can with what you have.

MRR: With something like Bitchpork in mind: I have to assume that someone like yourself who built their house specifically to share it with others for art-making is thinking about community in relation to art-making all the time. Maybe not actively, but more like its an app running in the background of your proverbial phone / brain. Am I correct, do you think about community and art a lot? I would love to hear some Jessee Rose Crane philosophies about that.
Jeez, yeah, I don't know what else to do with my time here. I really don't. I hate art and music a lot of the time. What mean is I hate commercial, elitist, patronizingly didactic, masturbatory arrogant egos. I stick to the basics so I don't lose my mind too much. Art changes consciousness. For me, real art is the opposite of elitist. It's without language and full of meaning. It's for and by everyone. I moved to this place having only seen the house once. Philip unlocked the door and in I stepped into dusty, dark, puke-green carpet and curtain-covered cave. I actually thought to myself, "We just have to get rid of the trash and paint the walls and this place will be great." In reality, it's been a seven-year process of rehabbing every room, one at time, including plumbing and electrical. Tom Hanks in *The Money Pit* paints a picture. There was a cast iron pipe running through the center of the house that had become so rusted there was only a trickle of water on the second floor. Philip and I tore out the second story toilet and discovered a petrified squirrel hanging out from the porcelain that had come in through the vent and into the attic only to become stuck and meet a gruesome end. There were boxes and boxes of every Christmas, Easter, birthday, or anniversary card that Philip's grandparents had received in their lifetime. There were five-foot cabinets full of pressed and folded men's white cotton briefs. So many mice skeletons with the contents of their stomachs still visible as the puke green carpet, and Big Red gum. I picked up a pretty, shiny, gold box the size of a Happy Meal, and I couldn't figure out how to open it. I shook it and clawed it and sunk when I somehow realized it was a box of cremains. I guess it's not unusual for no one to pick up your ashes.

As an artist who makes work from mostly trash, of course I wanted to keep everything. On top of being creatively obsessive, I am also a sentimental person, so cleaning out the old house was nothing short of cathartic. We tore out and replaced every ceiling while bagging blackened cellulose insulation by the truck load. I scraped wallpaper and chucked countless rusty jars of canned pickles, onions, tomatoes, and the yet-to-be-identified. The work forced me to think about possessions with a fixated intensity. It has made me re-examine the real and metaphysical weight of every object in my life. Rehabbing the house became a large unending sculpture. At the end of the day bands are boring. It's not "cool" to be in a band. Spread the word. I think nurses are cool. I think social workers are cool. If you're a social worker and in a band, that is good too. Hopefully you don't get trapped working at a bar your whole life, and if you do, take time out for others. Contribute to the people around you. One of reasons I was drawn to punk as a kid was the idea that everyone was equal. There were no ranks or ladders to climb, just expression, feeling, and connection. The main reason I was drawn to this house is I knew I could share it with others. You got to be crazy to move from Chicago to the middle of nowhere. But all the work we put into this place sticks. The goal for next year is to file for not-for-profit status and slowly get funded. My dream of dreams is to eventually have enough outside support to pay people to come here and make art. It's all about sharing whatever privilege and power you possess. I know I can make it happen. I'm crazy enough to do it.

MRR: When we first met playing a show together last year, I was really struck by how quickly we connected the next morning at your house, just sitting around and talking

about what keeps us inspired with making art. I love good conversations and find them really inspiring to my work. Is this same for you? I wonder if you might be able to recall some conversations that have really had a provocative effect on your mind or very viscerally in your work.
That's a great question. I felt super connected the first time we met too. You were sitting on our indoor porch swing that's spray-painted gold, swaying. I felt connected forever from that conversation. I'm so happy to have our record on Sister Polygon because y'all care about music in a sincere and honest way. I'm trying to think of a good convo to share, but that kind of experience is difficult to describe. What I can say is that I get so fucking stimulated by good conversation that it makes me very high. It's how I feel playing music too. It's the ultimate connection. My mind races after a good lecture or someone openly sharing how they move through the world. People are generally nervous and guarded, but I'm always down to get into the near-death experience story with a total stranger. I lose copious amounts of energy in large groups but relish talking to one or two people at a time. That's why I love having this place as a refuge for creative thinkers. People come here and it's quiet and focused and we can share a meal and show one another the beautiful things we're putting out into the universe.

MRR: If you could cover one song, what would it be?
Generally, I don't enjoy playing other people's songs. Like I said since, I was a kid I've just always done things differently without even being conscious of it. For me to cover a song, you need to have something to offer or don't do it. Sometimes a cover is better than the original for sure, but a lot times it's a real butcher fest. It's cool to cover a band that inspires you as a way of connecting and showing your friends. Speaking of covers, I'm by no means an Elvis fan (I think to be an Elvis fan you have to have a velvet portrait of him somewhere in your house) but the other day when I was driving "How's The World Treating You?" came on, and I thought to myself, "I could see myself fuzzing this up." Philip and I recorded and put out a tour tape a couple years ago that had Silver Jews' "Trains Across the Sea" and Sonic Youth's "Schizophrenia." The song "Schizophrenia" I feel like has always been one of my favorite songs, even before, I was born if that makes sense. Not a cover, but a collaboration I'd like to make happen is to record some of my sister Anna Sky's songs. She's a decade older than me and showed me a lot of witchy secrets when I was little like Belly, the Breeders, and Sinead O'Connor. She's schizoaffective, so reality is more than just subjective for her. She's very strong and brutal and has written some stunning songs I hope to help in getting documented someday.

Thanks you Miranda and Katie for asking me these questions. If you made it this far, thanks for reading. And thanks to *Maximum Rocknroll* for giving me the space to rant.

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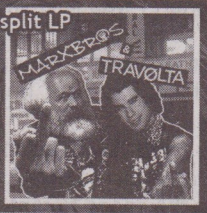

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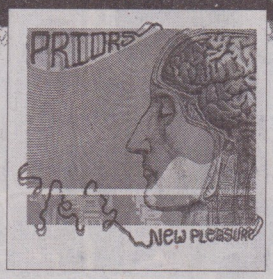

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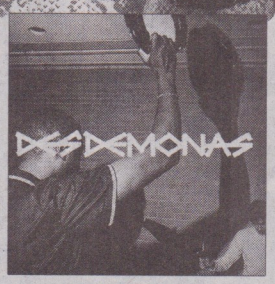

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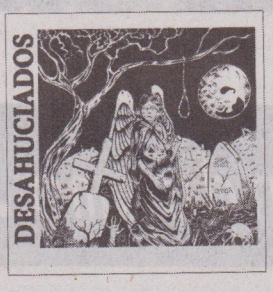

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THE SHIFTERS

The Shifters live, work and play in Melbourne, Australia. They're the kind of band one would only describe as "punk" when discussing with music connoisseurs. They sound like a casually depressed adult rock band, more concerned with the "casual" part than with the "rock" one. People and critics have been calling them UK DIY, post-punk and indie pop. Their music feels laid back, nonchalant, puzzled, cold, warm, and sunny at the same time. Like a drunk country band playing to a stoned audience at the end of a particularly uneventful night, it sounds anything but melodramatic. It whispers "Life is beautiful" and "Life is ugly" and "Who cares?" and "I do" all in the same breath. Apart from the usual rock instruments, the Shifters use keys and second-hand violins and squeaky melodicas. They seem to owe something to down under acts like the Clean and Bitch Prefect, UK weirdos like the Fall and the Country Teasers, NY art-school dropouts like Lou Reed and Nico and their mates. They released three records in 2018—their demo pressed to wax on French label Future Folklore, the bedroom-sounding "Just Sat Down" 7" on US label Digital Regress, and their first proper full-length on Trouble in Mind, which sounds slightly more upbeat. Singer / guitarist Miles answered some questions for *MRR*.

Introduction and interview by Alex Simon.

Pictures by Jamie Wdziekonski.

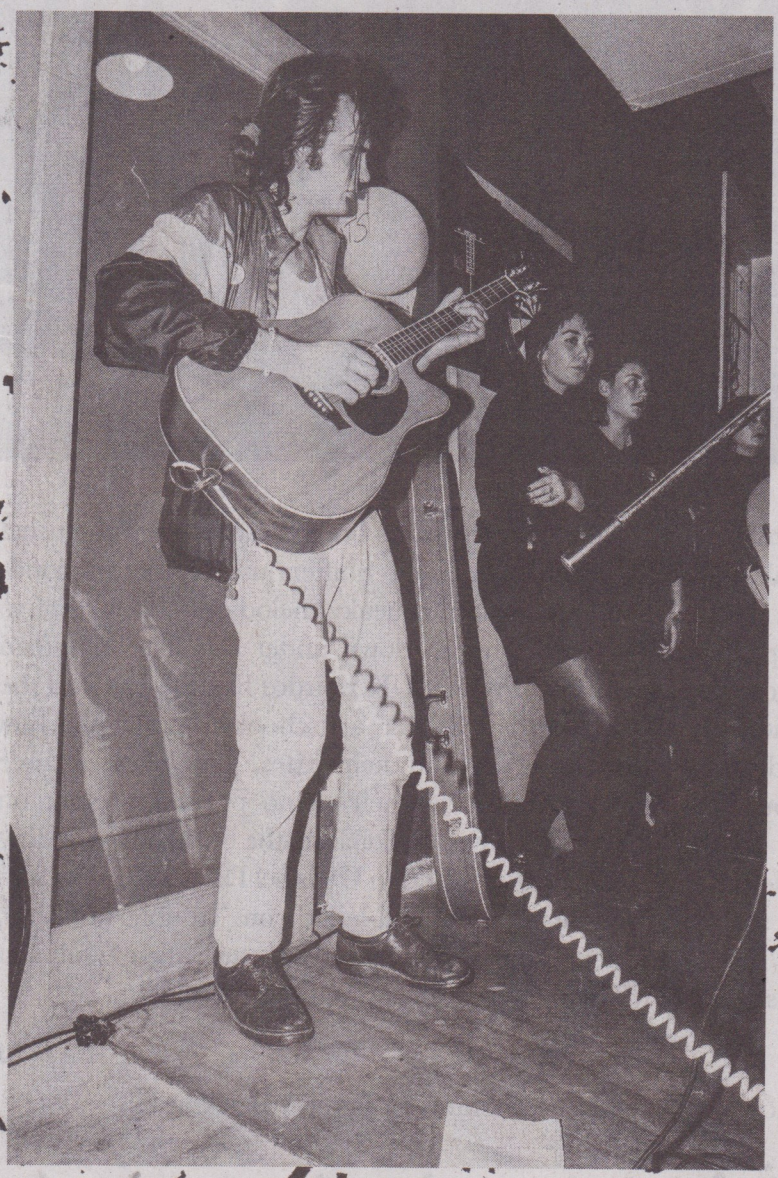
MRR: Your music feels really laid back. The vocals, especially, have a downright lazy quality. Tell us about your daily life.
I work as a cook during the day in the city. I live with my girlfriend and cat in a small Victorian cottage-type house. I'm quite the hermit, to be honest. I watch a lot of documentaries and play video games. Mates live in the general vicinity and we drink beers in each other's living rooms and listen to records. I hang out with [my bandmate] Tristan quite a bit at pubs and discuss things at hand. Tristan's great, he's a real oddball. There are shows pretty much every night in my area, so if I'm feeling up for it or someone particular is playing it's pretty easy to go watch and walk back home or to a mate's place for beers and hangs.

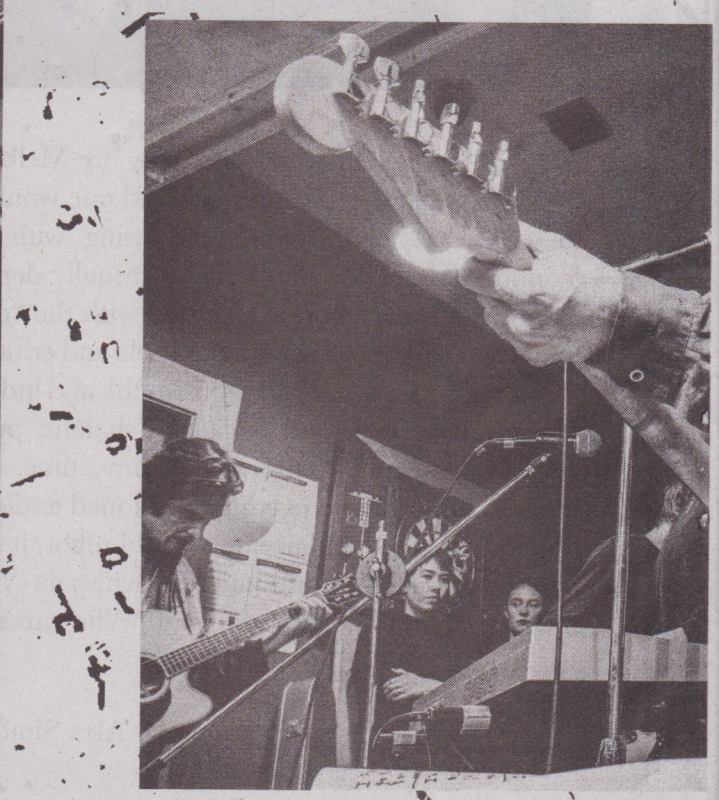
MRR: What about your neighborhood? What does it smell like? Who are the local characters that could star in a biopic?
I live in Collingwood. It's an inner city suburb of Melbourne with working class roots. It's being quickly gentrified with new apartments going up daily and rental prices skyrocketing. Melbourne sometimes feels like one big building site. Collingwood is cold in winter, as most rentals that we can afford don't have heating. Same goes for summer...hot! I live on the fringe of Smith Street, which is a rather hipster / tourist area flanked by council flats. It used to be a lot more rough. It's still got junkies and interesting folks and great old pubs, but the shops have changed a fair bit, although there is a record store resurgence on Johnston Street. You can still find cheap food. I think my favourite part of Collingwood is all of the different kinds of foods. The Tote is just up the street, as are many of the venues we play in. It's very handy to just walk home from a show. My neighborhood smells leafy in winter and sometimes pissy in summer. The autumn trees line most back streets beautifully. Behind my house is a Turkish old man hangout spot where I buy Turkish coffee and cheap orange soft drink. It's open late and you can smoke and watch Al Jazeera or Turkish *Days of our Lives*. He does cheap homemade food also.

MRR: Are people in Melbourne excited about the band?
The bands and friends we have around us in Melbourne are very supportive and it's a great city to be in right now for making music. Within the community here, some people would be excited about the band for sure, but we are by no means the most popular.

MRR: Last week I was in a record shop in Paris, and I talked with the seller about Oz music. He told me he sold 80 or so copies of your demo LP in a few months.
We have had quite a few messages from US and European labels / distros / bands over time, but we are definitely getting more interest in Europe since Future Folklore released the LP. That's amazing about the shop in Paris! I never would have thought. We would love to come over and play in the not too distant future, and it's in the works as we speak. Yann and Yohan from Future Folklore have been super supportive, and we are so thankful for them doing the record and sharing our music. The same goes for Paul Messis at Market Square, Ronnie from Digital Regress plus Alexa and Stanley from It Takes Two.

MRR: When you first talked about the band, did you agree you wanted to sound like anything in particular? Most reviews seem to mention the same bands—the Fall, the Country Teasers, the Velvet Underground, UK DIY bands, etc.
After living in the UK for a few years, I came home wanting to start a band that was an amalgamation of all of my favorite stuff, to try and release a record or two, and to support Ben Wallers [from the Country Teasers], all of which we have happily achieved. I don't think the music we make will ever be super popular or earn us much money, but if our releases





get related to groups like the Fall, Country Teasers, and the Velvet Underground in a positive sense, then that's great with me. Those aforementioned bands, I feel, are some of the more interesting, challenging and clever music to come out of "rock'n'roll" and I don't think we even come close to being in the same boat as them.

MRR: Outside of these bands, what do you listen to?
The Kinks, Beefheart, Yeah Yeah Noh, the Raincoats, Swell Maps, Pere Ubu, Doctor Octagon...I'm fairly musically predictable, really. I still listen to the music my parents got me into as a kid like the Animals, the Beatles, Bowie, early Cher, Dylan, Elmore James, etc.

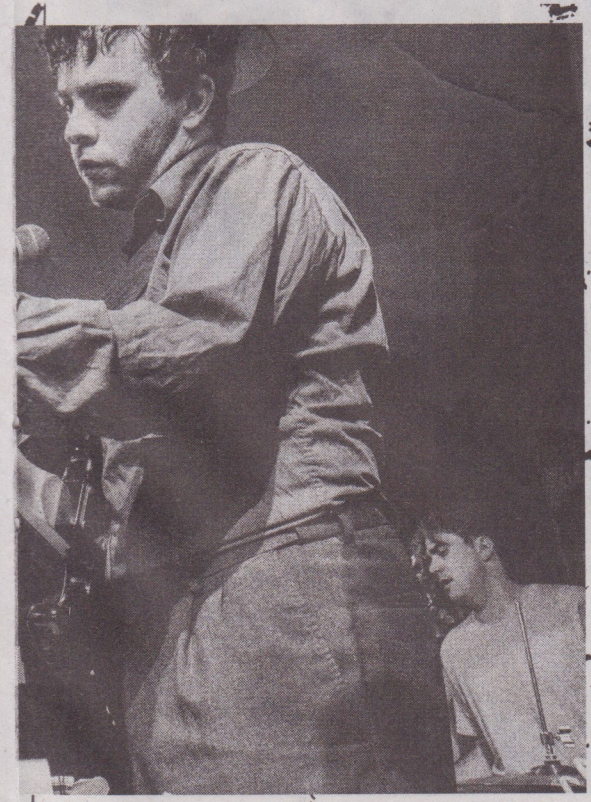
MRR: What about Oz bands ?
Some current Aus bands I dig: Parsnip, Primo!, Big Supermarket, Exek, the Faculty, Bloody Hell, Singing Lessons, Kitchens Floor, Terry, Nightclub. Some older Aus bands...Tactics, Essendon Airport, Rowland S. Howard, Go-Betweens, Bird Blobs, early Masters Apprentices.

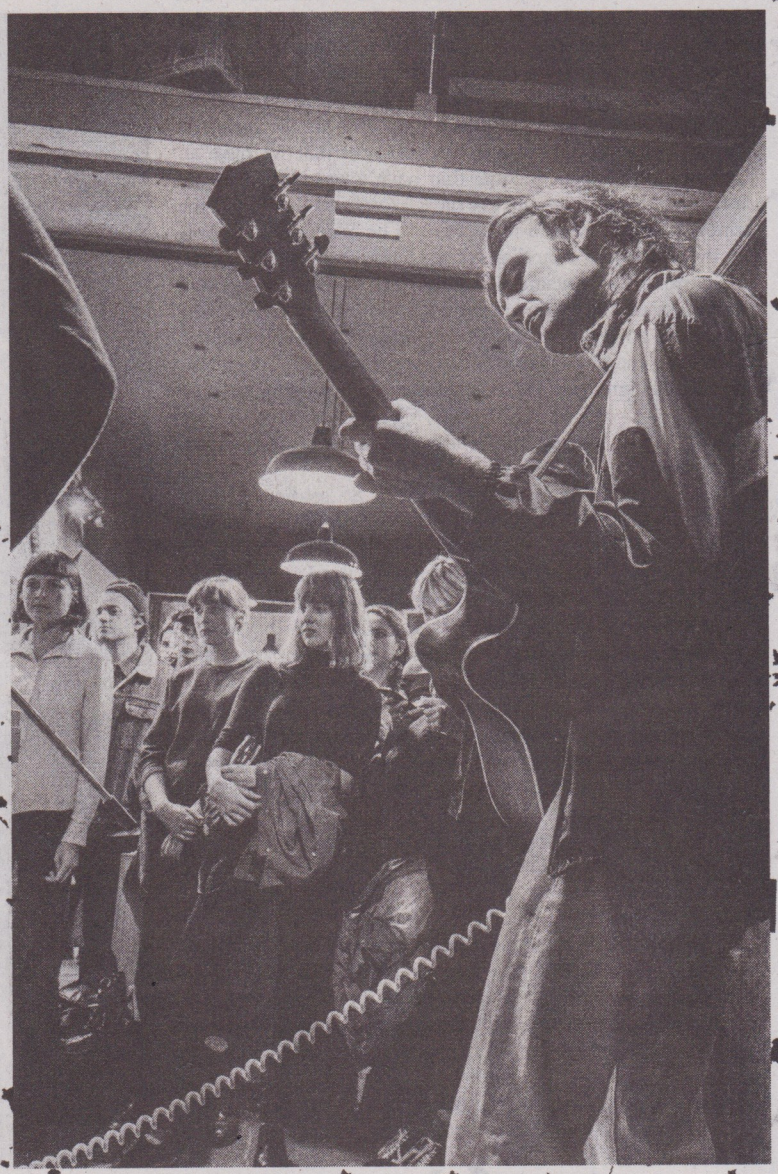
MRR: Let's talk about your practice space. What does it look like, what kind of people do you meet there? Can you practice when you want?
We practice in an old house with Victorian origins down the end of a leafy suburban street in Coburg. Tom from the Faculty and Comfort35 Records and Liam from Bitch Prefect / Nightclub live there. It's great, it has a front veranda with couches gathered from hard rubbish (a few times a year residents of Melbourne put unwanted items / furniture / rubbish out on the streets for the council to collect, but the best items quickly get snatched up by keenest eye). We can't practice too late there as it's close to another house and they have young kids. Saying that though, they have never complained and tell us they enjoy the tunes. There is actually footage of the space in the "Creggan Shops" video—the room with the leopard picture on the wall.

MRR: Describe the process of writing a Shifters song.
It usually goes something like this... I will write a song on GarageBand at home fueled by many instant coffees and spliffs, which puts a weird twitchy / loose energy on the tunes. Then at the next practice I will do my best to remember what it was I was playing and show the others. They always come out different and mutate somewhat. I think it works well like that. The band flesh out my simpleton approach. The new 7" on Digital Regress has three of my solo GarageBand efforts on it, and they are more loose for sure. Occasionally Tristan or someone will approach with a riff or two and I will add words. Lou is great at coming up with keyboard ideas and Ryan is a bit of an arranger and into DJing. Chris adds flair! He's actually one of Melbourne's best drummers, but we have him in on acoustic guitar.

MRR: On a given week, how much time do you devote to the Shifters?
Between the five of us, it can be hard to organize practicing because of conflicting work hours and life in general. Sometimes we will go through a good patch and practice once a week, and others we will only practice last minute and sometimes not even that, which can work, but sometimes doesn't. Some weeks I might spend hours recording at home, but then I might go a month without picking up my guitar.

MRR: I'm intrigued by the lyrics to that song "Creggan Shops."
The song is written about growing up in Derry during the Troubles of the '60s and '70s. I have since I was young been interested in the happenings of Northern Ireland. I remember watching the film *In the*





Name of the Father when I was quite young and being fascinated with it all.

The song itself came at the end of me reading a book called *On Dead Ground* by Raymond Gilmour [a volunteer in the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) and Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA)]. "Creggan Shops" is by no means about Gilmour himself but was simply source material for a time and place. I recently did an interview for a Northern Irish paper out of Derry and the headline was "Australian singer pens song about Raymond Gilmour," which is an inflammatory comment as Gilmour is a hated man in some households of Northern Ireland and I specifically wrote the song from the neutral perspective of a child brought up in a household of split ideals. I got a message from a Sinn Feinn Supporter asking why the hell I'm writing about Gilmour!

I have a friend in Derry, and he assures me that the interview was taken well by all of those he spoke to about it, so that eased my mind some.

My Derry friend's name is Rory, and he plays in a band called Strength NI. Rory contacted us after hearing "Creggan Shops" though a mate of his and was very interested in how a Melbourne band is writing about his hometown. Strength NI recorded a response track of sorts called "1956 Olympics." It's about colonialism and genocide in Australia juxtaposed with lyrics about the Shifters. When and if we play in Europe, we will for sure be stopping in Derry.

MRR: On some of your records it's written, "The Shifters acknowledge the Wurundjeri people as the traditional owners of the land on which these songs were written and recorded. " It caught my attention.
When we first started releasing music, we didn't expect to ever be heard or even release as much as we have. As time has gone on, it has become apparent that we have an audience. We release records that have a reception and are distributed internationally. We have a responsibility to use the opportunities presented to us fairly. The Wurundjeri people are the traditional custodians of the land where we live, write, and perform as musicians. It is important to acknowledge that the history of "Australia" is not an honest or fair history. The Australian government has never respected and continues to undermine indigenous culture. To suppress and ignore culture is extremely ignorant, as to do so mutes positive progression.

MRR: What about the song "Algeria"? Have you been there?
No, I've never been. "Algeria" is about SS soldiers gaining anonymity and the possibility of eventual freedom by joining the French Foreign Legion at the end of World War II. If applicants gain successful admission into the Legion (which many did as they were battle-hardened veterans of many years of fighting) and survive five years of service, they would gain French residency and a clean slate with new papers and a new identity.

MRR: Your new album, *Have a Cunning Plan*, just came out on Trouble In Mind. How did that happen?
Yes, we are very excited about this record. Last year sometime we were invited to play a Trouble In Mind showcase kind of night at the Tote. Caroline from Parsnip organised it all for Bill (one of the label owners) as he was in town for a while and really wanted some of his favorite Melbourne bands to play all on the same night. After we played, Bill and I were chatting, and he handed me a business card and asked if we wanted to do a record. It was a bit like in the movies. Bill and Lisa from Trouble In Mind have been so supportive of Australian bands over the years, and we are stoked and thankful to be involved in such a great label.

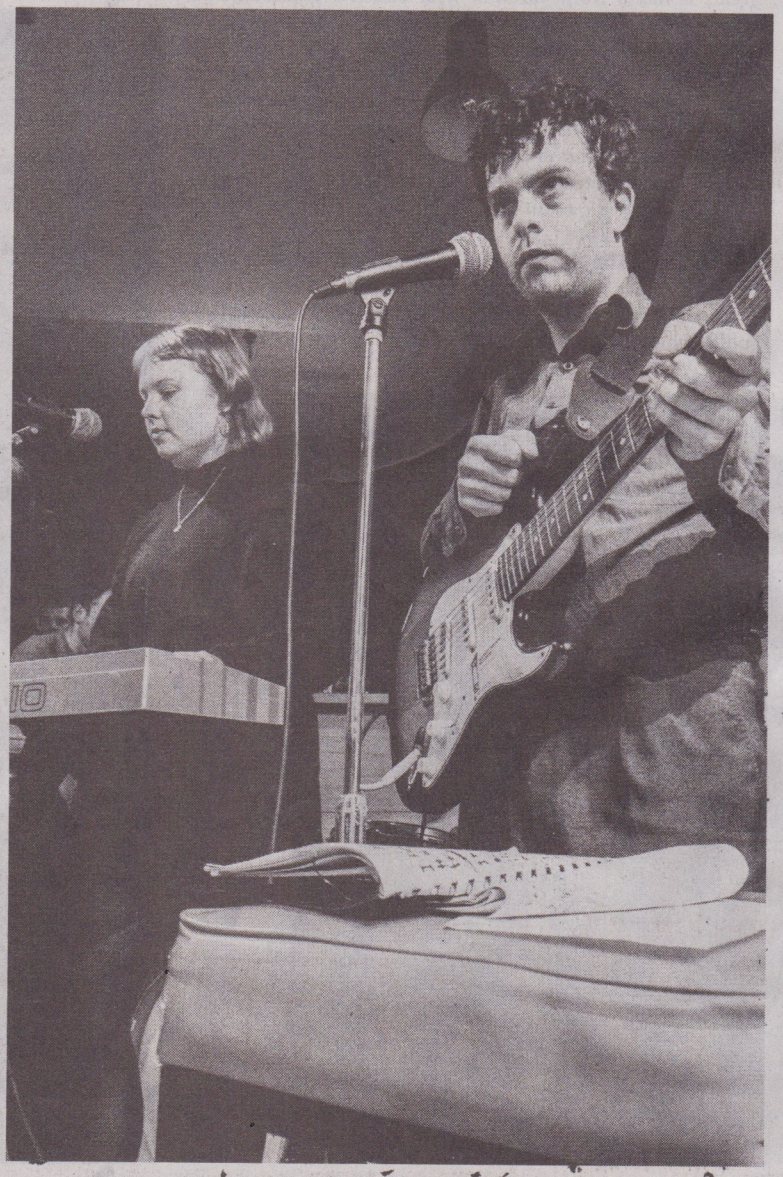
MRR: What about the record itself ?
It has some, but overall less historical references, and more localized observation I would say. I think it sounds different from our past releases but still sounds like us. We had six months before we had to hand it all in as a finished album art and all. We had the crux of an album ready for recording but were short a few songs, so I got to work on those and had the band playing them in no time. I think those last ones are my favourite. So we approached Al Montford (Terry, Total Control, UV Race) to record the album as I heard that he had started recording a few bands. He was fantastic at doing it and very supportive. We set up at our practice space I spoke of earlier and ended up recording twelve songs in a day, all live to tape. Then had a number of overdubbing sessions at Al's house in Preston. He's a great host, fantastic meals and coffee were flowing. Al is a legend and we are very thankful for him taking us on.

MRR: Any book recommendations?
Commando by Deneys Reitz. *Storm of Steel* by Ernst Junger. *Homage to Catalonia* by George Orwell. *We* by Yevgeny Zamyatin. *Chickenhawk* by Robert Mason. *Agincourt* by Juliet Baker.

Thanks a lot for having me, Alex.

theshiftersofmelbourne.bandcamp.com

The Shifters will tour Europe in the spring 2019.



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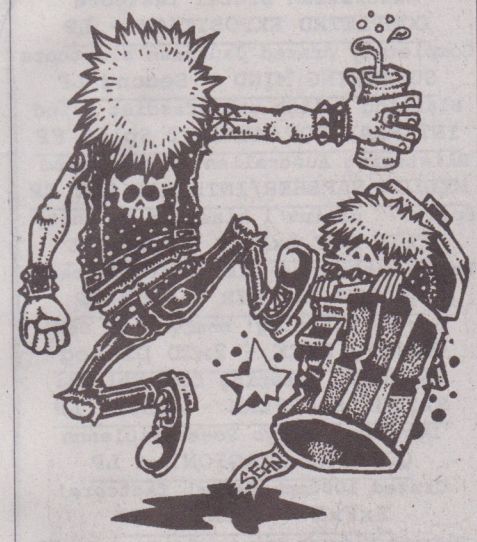

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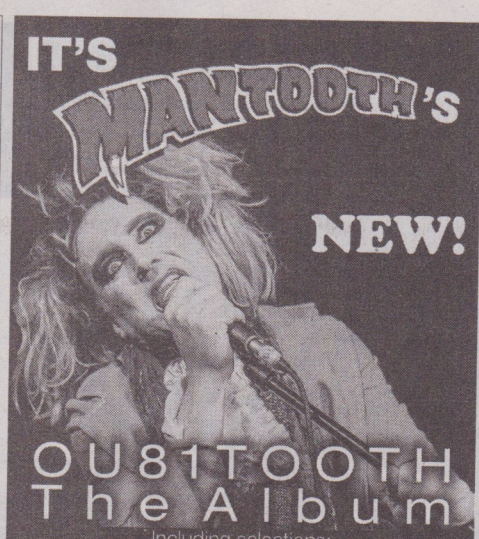

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PROTO IDIOT

I've seen Proto Idiot play a lot of times. It's a lot of fun. Mike, the bassist, looks like he should moonlight in a Grand Funk Railroad cover band (if such a thing existed). Andrew, the guitarist, dribbles and gurns. His neck does this swelling / throbbing veiny thing, as though he's getting an all-over body-erection. Callum, the drummer, has a big bald head. I like that a lot.

What about the music? Imagine the Homosexuals covering Abba's "Does Your Mother Know" and you're close. Or, better yet, visualize your favorite Kinks record played on a turntable made entirely of sand. What I'm trying to say is that it's scratchy, but it's also catchy. They've got records out on some labels, if you're interested–Slovenly, Trouble in Mind, and Bad Paintings, to be precise.

I've known Andrew for a long time. In fact, I was the only guest at his fourth birthday party (it was at a chain called Happy Eater...I threw up after eating too much). I've also played with him in a number of bands, including the Hipshakes. As for Mike, I used to share a house with him, so I'm intimately acquainted with his extensive grooming rituals. I've played in bands with him, too. Callum? Callum works in a pub, so I get to see him a lot on a vendor-client basis. He pulls a good pint.

In other words, there's no one better to interview Proto Idiot than me. We sat down together back in August at an undisclosed location to have a chat and drink a few beers. Here are some silly and some not-so-silly questions I asked them.

Interview and introduction
by Bruce Sargent and Jenn Reid.

Photos by Lucy Ridges.

MRR: What is Proto Idiot?
Andrew: Good question. I started it as a side project back in 2007, with all the songs I was writing at the time that didn't make sense for the Hipshakes. I gave out CDs at gigs, and then Pete from Slovenly Records asked if he could put some of the songs out. That was the *Andrew Anderson* LP, as I couldn't decide if the band was called Proto Idiot or that was the album title.
Mike: We weren't in the band then.
Callum: So it wasn't as good.
Andrew: Exactly. It stayed pretty crap until Mike and Callum joined, in 2013 I think. Then it started getting...not exactly good, but...something better. We've released two LPs together so far, and we've just finished a third. Hopefully that'll be out next year.

MRR: If you were an animal, what kind would you be?
Mike: My surname is Seal...so a seal, obviously.
Callum: A big one...maybe a gorilla.
Andrew: I'd say Mike is more of a pedigree dog than a seal. Gorilla seems about right for Callum.
Callum: What about you, then?
Andrew: Is a prat an animal?
Callum: I think it's a kind of fish, yes.

MRR: Next question: which of these activities are you most likely to be found doing?
a) Making a soufflé
b) Riding a motorbike
c) Doing the ironing
d) Putting shelves up
Mike: Are we doing the activities together or alone?

MRR: Together.
Andrew: How would all three of us ride a motorbike together?
Mike: It could be a stunt bike.

MRR: Okay, alone then.
Mike: I cannot cook, I do not own an iron or a drill. I have, however, been riding on motorbikes since I was six.
Andrew: You can ride a motorbike?
Mike: *On* motorbikes...if someone else is driving it.
Andrew: I don't think you drive a motorbike.
Callum: I can cook, but not fancy foreign muck like soufflés–that's for soft arses. I'd say putting up shelves–it's the closest to drumming.

MRR: I'd go with that...drumming has the same mixture of coordination and smashing things that DIY has. Following on, here's my next question: Proto Idiot has the world "idiot" built into it...but who do you think is the silliest person in pop music?
Andrew: That's an easy one.
Callum: Dave Grohl.
Andrew: Exactly.
Mike: I was going to say Billy Idol.
Callum: Well, you'd be wrong.
Mike: Maybe. Dave Grohl is surely more annoying than silly? Although that petition thing he did for music in Cornwall was pretty stupid.

MRR: American readers, you'll want to look that one up online...it was very, very cringey. Okay, I've got an actual music question for you now–what's the garage rock scene in Manchester like? Any good?
Andrew: It's not great, to be honest. There are good bands and some good promoters, but playing gigs in England is generally way harder than in America or Mainland Europe.
Callum: In Europe you get unlimited beer and sausages. It's top.

Mike: And somewhere to sleep. And, sometimes, someone to sleep with. If that's your thing.
Andrew: I'm not sure of the exact economic reasons for it, but we might get paid a quarter as much for a gig in Manchester as in, say, Brussels or Amsterdam.
Callum: And no free beer...or, worse, warm cans of Carling or Carlsberg.
Mike: I thinwk people are just more interested in garage rock and punk music overseas anyway. People in England like indie music, which is usually a bit crap.
Andrew: America is good too, except for the long drives.
Mike: And they've got that game in the Midwest where you have to throw a metal ring onto a hook. That's a lot of fun.
Callum: As good as darts?
Mike: Better than darts.

MRR: You heard it here first–that game with the ring is better than darts. All right, let's find out a bit more about your influences.. Have you ever posed in front of a mirror pretending to be somebody and, if so, who?
Callum: Dave Grohl.

MRR: Why?
Callum: Know thy enemy.
Mike: Captain Hook. I like earrings and pirate-wear in general. I also find children extremely annoying, so there's that connection too. Although Robin Williams was great...but yes, Captain Hook.
Andrew: I remember wearing my mum's shoes when I was about six and strutting around in front of a mirror. That was fun, and good stage practice for being in a band.

MRR: What about now, though?
Andrew: Not recently...although I did walk in on you pretending to be a harmonica player. You had your shirt off, and were trying to teach yourself how to play by watching your own reflection.

MRR: Moving on...who did you look up to when you were growing up?
Mike: Taller people.
Andrew: Not sure. I told my parents I wanted to be a burglar, which I think worried them.
Callum: Kurt Russell.
Andrew: Why Kurt Russell?
Callum: Have you seen *Escape from LA*?
Andrew: No.
Callum: Well you wouldn't understand, then.

MRR: Mike, this one's specifically for you–how often do you wash your hair? And what is your secret to your healthy hair?
Mike: Everyone's different, but don't over wash–that's a novice mistake. Get up twenty minutes earlier in the morning so you can give yourself more hair prep time. You'll soon be looking glossy, bouncy, and ready for the pages of magazines like *Creem*.
Callum: Personally, I wash Mike's hair twice a week. It helps me cope with my own hair loss.
Andrew: The band that washes together, stays together.

MRR: Good advice. Next question: while walking along a deserted beach, you spy a couple making love. Do you stay and watch?
Mike: Depends on the couple.
Callum: Definitely. I'd be naked too, of course.
Andrew: I agree with Callum. It's only awkward if you're clothed and they are naked–that creates a dissonance. But if

you're naked too, that's fine I think.

MRR: So you would watch?
Andrew: As an English person, I'm deeply ashamed not only of who I am but also of my own anatomy and of nudity in general. So I couldn't take off my clothes...so, by my own rules, I couldn't watch.
Callum: I'll video it for you and let you watch later.
Andrew: Cheers to that.

MRR: Okay, so let's say you are watching, and you decide you're a bit peckish. You walk back down the beach, buy some chips, then return. What condiment do you have on your chips?
Callum: French Vanilla coffee creamer.
Andrew: On chips?
Callum: Try it. Stops other people stealing your chips, too.
Mike: Any apart from mustard, which tastes like gas.
Andrew: I'd have mayonnaise, and those chips they do in Holland...they're dead nice.
Mike: Another reason why gigs in Europe are better than gigs in England–superior chips, superior condiments.
Andrew: The pickles are good too. When we did a Hipshakes tour years ago, we played some gigs with King Louie, and he was going round collecting as many pickles as he could...no idea how he got them all home, his van was full of them.

MRR: I've got another music one for you–what advice would you give to American bands touring in the UK?
Callum: Don't.
Mike: I'd say have lower expectations, I think. Unless you're a big act you're gonna struggle to make money. There's some decent DIY venues, though, and some nice promoters who'll help you ou–you just have to find the right people. The DIY Touring UK / Europe group on FB is useful for that.
Andrew: If you're a crappy band like us, treat it as a discounted holiday, that's what we usually do. If you want to make mega bucks and go home with cash, stick to Mainland Europe, I reckon, or just do a few big gigs in London.

MRR: Politics now. If you had a hotline to Margaret Thatcher, what would you like to say to her?
Mike: I would prank call. Take that, Maggie!
Andrew: First, I'd want to ask about the whole being dead thing. Then maybe some vegetable tips–her dad was a greengrocer, right?
Callum: Yep. I'd say "Keep up the good work, toots."
Andrew: You mean, keep being dead?
Callum: She's doing a bang up job of it.

MRR: Okay, I have a non-sex, non-culinary, non-music question for you now. If you weren't a pop star, what would you be?
Andrew: Surely, being a pop star is a music question.
Mike: I'd be a plumbing star.

MRR: Callum, your answer?
Callum: Boring.
Andrew: You could never be boring. Not with a bonce like that.

MRR: Final question: what does the future hold for Proto Idiot?
Mike: Futuristic music made by Proto Idiot.
Andrew: We've just recorded our next album, the follow up to *Leisure Opportunity*. Then we're trying to organize a tour to Japan for 2019, which we're hoping will finally make us famous. Or at least we can tell our friends that's what happened, since they probably won't be able to verify it.
Callum: We've also got ambitious recording ideas for 2019. It's going to be like that Metallica documentary *Some Kind of Monster*, only much, much worse.

MRR: Cheers to that.

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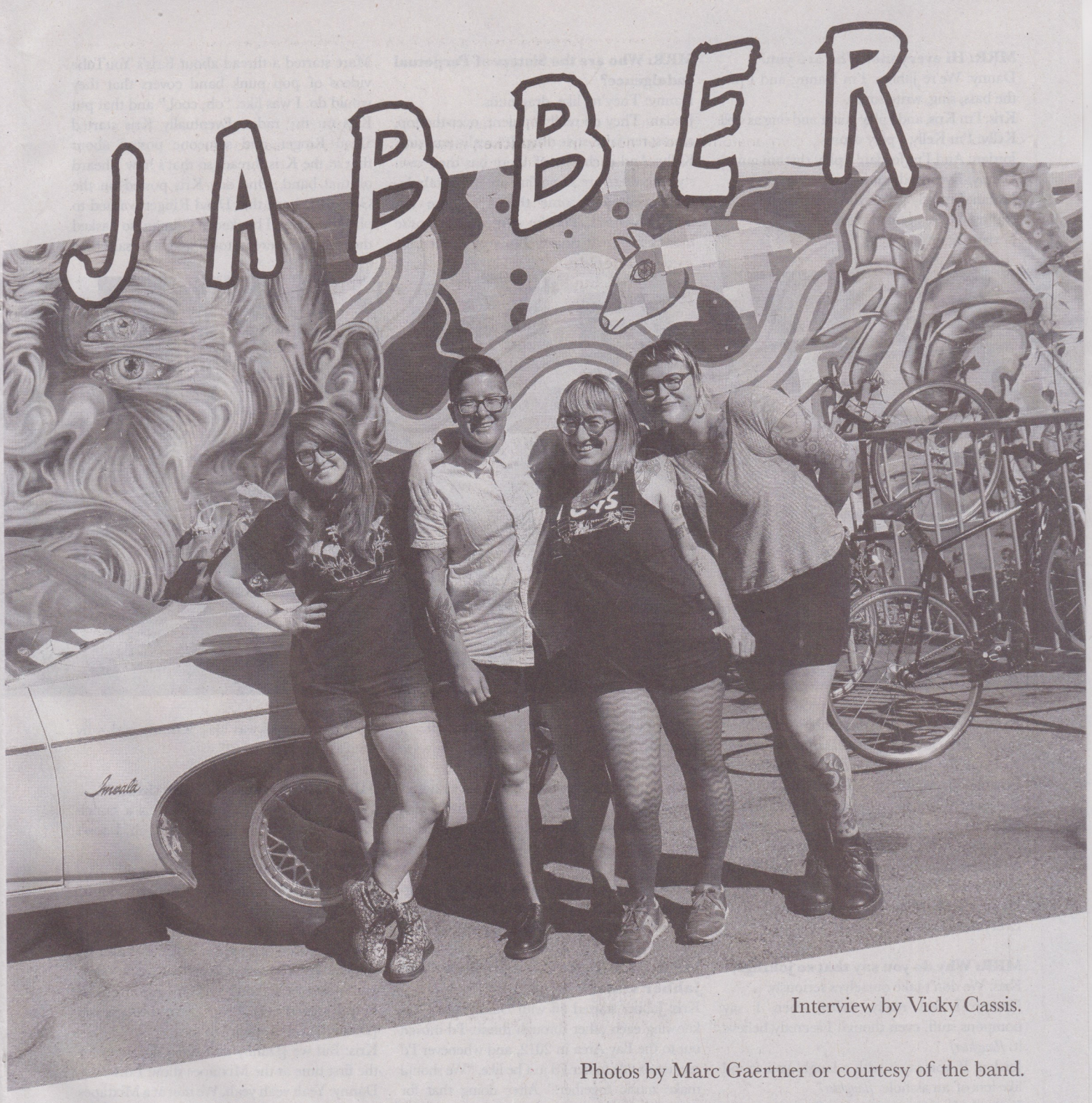
JABBER



Interview by Vicky Cassis.

Photos by Marc Gaertner or courtesy of the band.

Sitting down with Jabber, it was clear how much they loved each other; they talked about it for 45 minutes straight, finishing each other's sentences and laughing constantly. They've somehow collaboratively written a new EP as a long-distance band, available now on Asian Man Records, which to me is a testament to their strong bonds as friends and musicians. Their ability to grow together musically and lyrically, to write catchy, cohesive songs filled with harmonies, hooks, and leads, all despite distance, is truly a noteworthy feat. I feel lucky to have had the opportunity to catch them all in the same place at the same time! If you're on the East Coast, you too can get the full Jabber expérience this fall while they're on tour!

MRR: Hi everyone! Who are you?
Danny: We're Jabber. I'm Danny, and I play the bass, sing, write songs.
Kris: I'm Kris, and I play guitar and sing as well.
Kelly: I'm Kelly, I play drums.
Jordan: And I'm Jordan! I play rhythm guitar.
Danny: Everybody sings a little bit.
Jordan: I mostly yell in the background.
Danny: We're good at harmonies.
Jordan: Yeah!

MRR: Who are the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence?
Danny: They're, like, drag nuns.
Jordan: They do really opulent, over-the-top, almost ren faire-style drag? It's really amazing.
Kelly: And each one of them has their own style, so there are some that are more kabuki-influenced, and some that are more ren faire-influenced. They're gorgeous and raise money for great causes. I'm very excited for today; I can't wait for the drag show stuff.
Danny: Same. I haven't seen their show, so I'm very excited.
Kelly: And it's our annual Bay Area show!
Danny: Yeah! I live in Portland, Maine, which is very far away. I moved there a little over three years ago.

Marc started a thread about Kris's YouTube videos of pop punk band covers that they would do. I was like, "oh, cool," and that put Kris on my radar. Eventually Kris started Dead Ringer, and someone posted about that in the Kris thread, so that's how I heard of that band. One day Kris posted on the Gilman fb page that Dead Ringer wanted to play there, and I booked at Gilman, so I asked them if they were in town and Kris said they lived here now! I was like, "Oh my god, why aren't we best friends?!"

Kelly: That's the one thing about this band that I first loved. When Danny originally sent out the first Jabber demo, or whatever became *Too Many Babes*, I was like, "Oh my god! There are so many good harmonies! I love this band, I want more of it!" *[laughter]* And then five years later she was like, "Hey, do you wanna be in this band?" And I was like, "Yeah! Yeah, I do!" *[laughter]*
Danny: Yeah, we're a really good band.
Everyone: *[laughter]*

MRR: Why do you say that so jokingly?
Kris: We don't take ourselves seriously.
Danny: I feel really weird when I say pompous stuff, even though I secretly believe it. *[laughter]*
Jordan: If you say it with a laugh, you sound like less of an asshole. *[laughter]*
Kelly: As Jordan spits mocha all over herself...

MRR: I just wanna point out that it's a special occasion that the four of you are all in the same place! What brings you all here today?
Danny: The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence wanted us to play their Oakland Pride celebration! They flew me out because they're amazing angels.

MRR: Damn, so you've been a long-distance band for over three years now?
Danny: Yeah, we're an LDR band. *[laughter]*

MRR: Let's back up. How did Jabber start?
Kris: Jabber started off with Danny and I just knowing each other through music. I'd moved out to the Bay Area in 2012, and whenever I'd see her or talk to her I'd just be like, "We should make music together!" After doing that for maybe eight months, it finally happened. The other band I was in at the time was pretty much done, and I was just ready to start a new project.
Danny: OK, but the real story of how we met...

MRR: Real story!
Danny: There was this stupid message board called the Pop Punk Message Bored that I used to post on all the time, and my friend

MRR: There was a Kris fan thread?
Danny: Yeah, pretty much. It was a bunch of turdy boys just being like, "oh, uh, I don't know about this..."
Kelly: Well, and Kris did a lot of, like, Jawbreaker and other emo-y stuff, so a lot of those guys would be like, "This is cool, check out what this person's doing." I definitely remember that thread, because I was also on the Pop Punk Message Bored for many years, but somehow I didn't end up meeting Kris until I moved here. I met them through you [Danny], and through Jabber.
Kris: But we [Danny and Kris] did meet for the first time at the Mixtapes show, I think.
Danny: Yeah yeah yeah. We met at a Mixtapes show, and it was like, with New Found Glory or something?
Kris: No, it was Set Your Goals...
Everyone: *[laughter]*
Jordan: That is so fuckin' 2012.

MRR: So, when did Jordan and Kelly come along?
Danny: Well, we had a few drummer changes, and Jordan's our second rhythm guitar player.

Jordan: I knew Danny from the internet and going to shows at Gilman. We weren't super close, but we always said hi to each other. Then I moved to Oakland in 2014. We're actually coming up on my 4-year Jabberversary.
Danny: Oh my god.
Kris: Has it been that long?!
Jordan: Yeah, it has! Isn't that fucking crazy? But yeah, the month before I moved, I hit both Kris and Danny up to be like, "Uhhh, I really like Jabber, and if you ever need a guitar player..." And, like, I had never played guitar in a band before, but they said I should practice with them. I was scared because I'd never played in a band before! But I was like, "I like both of these people, and I feel like I'll be comfortable with them."

Kris: We pretty much forced Jordan to join and be our best friend.
Jordan: I regret nothing. There was no forcing necessary. It was a very easy transition.
Danny: Before Jordan joined the band, I thought Jabber was like, done. I was in this really depressive state, because it felt like the end to something I thought was really special. We weren't glomming well as the group we were before, and we were kind of disagreeing on a lot of stuff. We had stopped playing shows, and were just pretty much playing one-off shows. I think the last show we played was with the Sugar Stems, because we both really wanted to play that show. I was really sad that Jabber was ending. I felt like it was over, and then Kris was like, "Let's have Jordan be in the band." And I was like "OK! We need to keep Jabber going!"
Jordan: "Let's fuel this rocket with some farts!" And I shot it into space. *[laughter]*
Danny: Everything just got more fun from then on.
Kelly: Jordan brings the fun.
Jordan: Everyone else is fun, I just talk about farts.

MRR: What about you, Kelly? When did you join?

Kelly: I moved here about three years ago, and for about a year I was just working on my career as a freelance photographer. I moved from New York with no job, by the seat of my pants, and I didn't play music for like a year, which was really sucky. Before I moved, Danny had written some songs and asked me to jam when I was visiting. Then she moved to Maine and I moved here almost at the same time.
Danny: We high-fived in the air.
Kelly: Yeah, so in that first year I was just working as hard as I could, and not playing music. I didn't have time, and I hadn't found anyone I really felt comfortable playing with. Then at some point in 2016 they were like, "Hey, you should be in Jabber." And I was like, "Yeah, I really should be." The first show I played with them was at This Is My Fest, and then at Gainesville Fest last year.
Jordan: I think literally a year ago this weekend was our first show with you!
Kris: That sounds about right!
Danny: Happy anniversary, Kelly!

MRR: It's really cool to hear about a band that had rough patches, is long-distance, but is still a band and seems stronger than ever! You all have an album that's about to come out?

Danny: Yeah! It's called *Jabber Forever*!
Jordan: Because we decided this is our last line-up.
Danny: This is it, we're happy. We've had too many line-up changes. Also, I wanted everybody to have to say "Jabber Forever."
Kris: And we really love the Spice Girls. *[laughter]*
Jordan: Yeah, so we named it after their album title. I feel like it's really easy to do stuff in Jabber. This band is really easy to be in because we were all already friends on some level before we started playing music together.
Danny: I've been friends with Kelly for over a decade, just cross-country and seeing each other at punk shows.
Jordan: I think I've probably known you *[Danny]* for like a decade.
Danny: Yeah. It's weird, because we've all been friends for so long in strange ways. I'm probably the common denominator; I introduced everyone.
Kelly: But if you know Danny, that's not surprising at all. Danny literally knows everyone. And I agree with you, Jordan, that this band is super easy to be in, because we're all friends first in a way. So, playing music together is very comfortable. It's very fun, and it's never a job. I've never understood people who are in bands because they get paid, or, you know, those bands where everyone clearly never hangs out.
Danny: Yeah, like never seeing each other off stage…
Kelly: Yeah, like, why are they playing music together? It should be fun, it should be enjoyment for you as well as for an audience, as opposed to just being for a paycheck.
Kris: Or to be cool.
Kelly: Yeah, I don't understand how you can be cool if you just play together on stage and not hang out with anyone or talk to anyone. It just seems like a terrible way to live.
Danny: Basically, if you're not farting into a microphone to make your bandmates laugh, what are you even doing? *[laughter]*
Jordan: I feel like, you know, obviously we've had a little bit of inactivity because Danny lives, what, 3,000 miles away? But even still, Kris, Kelly, and I will get together. If we know if we have a show coming up, we'll start practicing together once a week months beforehand just to get back in the swing of things.
Danny: I practice by myself.
Jordan: I look forward to weekly practices, because it's super fucking fun.
Danny: When we decided to start writing an album last year at Fest—because we sold enough stupid t-shirts to afford it—I honestly don't think I could've considered writing an album with people across the country. And we'd never done it before; in the time that I'd moved to Maine, we'd never written songs long-distance. So, I was a little anxious, but I was like, "Well, if I can't do it with them, I can't do it with anyone." And it worked out! It was surprisingly so easy. We use this app called Scratch Track, and it's instant. You just record it into the app, and then they have it. I don't have to upload anything.
Kelly: It's super easy. So, yeah, we'd get these things from Danny that were like, "Hey, I just came up with this idea, here it is..."
Kris: It was a really cool process doing that and being able to accomplish that. You know, with Danny sending us her ideas, we'd be like, "Oh, OK, cool, let's add more to it." Then we'd send it back to Danny, and she wouldn't know what to expect, and we'd just hope she liked it. She's say it sounded great, and then we'd continue working on it.
Danny: I always felt like Kris could hear what I was trying to do in my head. Even though I can't make the noises I mean to all the time, Kris can hear them, so it's fine. Kris makes them happen.
Kris: I think that's what helped a lot, too. From us already working together writing songs, we know how we both write.
Jordan: You know each other's song language.
Danny: I just feel like from the very beginning, it's always been really easy to work with you, Kris.
Kris: It was not hard at all doing this long-distance. I mean, I was really anxious, too, but it was like, "Oh, it's like you are here."

MRR: Danny, do you begin the majority of the songwriting?

Danny: I guess the majority, yeah. I start over half of them. Kris will bring full songs

to the table and tells me what to play, and that's great.
Kelly: Kris wrote "Tempting and Exhausting" on this new EP, and when we started to practice it just the two of us, they already had an idea of what I should do with the drums. They already had a full idea of what it should sound like in their head. So I was like, "Cool. Tell me and I'm happy to do it."
Danny: Kelly wrote a song on our new EP, too. She's the first member of Jabber that me and Kris have allowed to write a song.

MRR: How did you write a song as the drummer?
Kelly: I've been in other bands where I've written songs. Danny and I were joking that we should have a song that sounded like the Unlovables. So I was like, can I write a song that sounds like Danny trying to write an Unlovables song? And then I did! It was inspired by Danny's and my mutual love of this very upbeat pop punk style. It's kind of in the original style of Jabber. I was like, there has to be lots of harmonies, and this specific structure. I just had to wonder what it would be like if Danny was writing an Unlovables song, and "Take Me Out Tonight" is what came out.
Jordan: Subsequently, you wrote probably the longest and fastest Jabber song.
Kelly: I didn't mean to write the fastest Jabber song. We're all paying the price for that, myself included.
Jordan: You know what? You're making us better musicians.
Kris: It's fun, and it's a great song to play!

MRR: Will you play it at the Oakland Pride show tonight?
Kelly: Yeah! We're gonna play all the songs on the new EP.
Danny: Yeah, we'll play all the new songs, and a bunch of old songs.
Kris: All hits.
Danny: It's nice that we finally have enough songs that we don't have to play certain songs anymore.
Kelly: It's funny, because Jabber's never had a full length, so I don't think of us as a ton-of-songs band.
Danny: We're an EP band.
Kris: And splits.
Kelly: If you count all the songs on all the splits and EPs, I guess it's a lot of songs.

MRR: This upcoming release is another EP?
Kelly: It's actually a single-sided 12", and the other side is etched with some cool doodles that our friend Tom Lowell made.
Danny: It's beautiful.
Kelly: It essentially looks like what your middle school notebook might've looked like if you were artsy and cool.
Kris: It's all the things we love etched on.
Danny: For the insert, I had a bunch of our friends doodle the words "Jabber Forever" and send them to me. It was cool to be able to include all of our friends and people we love in the construction of the artwork. Asian Man Records is putting it out, and its official release date is October 12th, but we have a few that we'll sell at the show tonight.
Kris: Tonight and on tour will be the only times we're able to sell the records.

MRR: And you released one song with a music video. It's sounds so good! And looks so good! Great job on the editing, Kelly.
Kelly: Aw, thank you very much! Danny's man friend, Stefan, filmed some of it, like while we were recording, and Danny filmed some of it, and I filmed some of it, and I edited it together. It's the story of us hanging out, recording, and going to sing karaoke.
Kris: Which is, like, what we do!
Kelly: It's essentially a day in the life of Jabber.

MRR: And you all are going on your first tour ever as a band! How long have you even been a band?
Jordan: Jabber's been a band for six years!
Danny: We're leaving right after Thanksgiving pretty much, and we're starting in Pittsburgh. It's going up the Northeast and a little bit of Canada. Toronto and Ottawa, but not Montreal because they didn't give us the time of day.
Kelly: Montreal, you missed out.
Kris: Booking is hard.
Kelly: You played yourself, Montreal. *[laughter]*
Danny: So, yeah, we're doing a two week tour, and we've never done a tour. We've pretty much just been a vacation band up until this point. We fly out to Fest, play that, and fly home, which is fun! This will be a vacation, too, just a longer one. We finally deserve a longer vacation.
Kris: We always wanted to tour, but it'd never worked out, which is why we'd only do Fest. After Fest last year, we realized we should tour because we had the perfect line-up.
Jordan: And it was our 3rd year in a row playing Fest since becoming more active, so we wanted to do a thing of our own.
Kris: Let's write new music so we don't play the same set every year…
Jordan: Exactly.

MRR: Are you all skipping Fest because you're touring?
Everyone: Yes.
Danny: Also, they didn't ask us. They must have been tired of seeing us cover weird '90s music.
Jordan: Yeah, like, "We get it, you only like the '90s and Josie and the Pussycats…."
Kelly: And we're like, "Yeah, we do. What of it?"
Jordan: So we're gonna go play it for people who also like it.
Kelly: Exactly!
Kris: I feel like they expect bands now to hit them up, and it's cool that it seems like every year there are more and more new bands playing. It's cool they're getting that opportunity.

MRR: Fest seems awesome to play, but it seems like a better move to do a tour for a new release. Do you think you'll want to tour more after?
Kris: I always wanna tour.
Jordan: Yeah!
Danny: Kris is already trying to get us to do a West Coast tour.
Kelly: I want to do a West Coast tour because I moved away from the East Coast to not be there in winter, and now we're touring there in winter. It's gonna be real cold, there's the possibility of it snowing, but it's fine. I think I can handle it for two weeks.
Jordan: I was on tour on the East Coast last year, and other than Maine I fine with most of my clothing.

Danny: I brought Jordan a scarf in Maine, because Composite went on tour right after Fest.
Jordan: Yeah, so Jabber played Fest, and then I flew from Fest to Pittsburgh so my other band could start tour. I couldn't pack the full range of clothing needed for that, because I was gonna be gone for three weeks total and my bass was my checked bag. It was fine. I only got so sick that I had to go to urgent care.
Kelly: Lots of Emergen-C, lots of hand-washing.
Danny: We won't be around as many people as we were at Fest.

MRR: But you will be cooped up in a van with a bunch of people.
Danny: It's a car! We're using Ramona's gear.
Kris: We're going on tour with Ramona from Philly, and Abby offered her car to us.
Jordan: Which is so nice!
Kris: Yeah! They'll be providing a backline for us, and they'll be driving their van.
Jordan: It's such a sweet set-up. It's gonna be so easy, we're so lucky.
Danny: We owe them big time. We should probably buy Abby a new car. *[laughter]*
Kris: With all that money we'll make...
Jordan: Yeah, once we get that Asian Man Records money...
Kris: But yeah, this tour is gonna be great.
Jordan: It'd be cool to do a couple of tours a year.

all's first band playing instruments. Playing music with people can feel so vulnerable.
Jordan: Yeah! I had played with a couple dinguses in high school for maybe two weeks, but all they wanted to do was write shitty Blink-182-style songs about wanting to fuck their step-moms. *[collective eugh]* Yeah, I peaced out on that shit real quick. That discouraged me from playing an instrument for a long time.
Kelly: I've only been in bands with men like twice. Most bands I've ever been in have just been with my closest non-dude friends, and I don't know that I could be in a band with just anyone. Again, to harken back to what I was saying before, I don't know how anyone can just join a band because it's there, rather than because the people in it are your friends who you're close with and feel comfortable being vulnerable with. Especially when it comes to writing songs.
Jordan: I'm sure there are a lot of bands where people are friends first, but there's so much ego at play, especially in bands full of cis-men. It's a fucking thing. But I feel like there's very little ego, here, and that makes it super easy, and conflicts don't really come up.

MRR: And then that level of comfort makes it easy to bring songs to the

around the people you play with, and not just settle because you don't want to go out of your way to find people to play with. I feel very lucky to be involved in the projects that I'm in.
Danny: I feel like Jabber spoiled me, and now I'm very selective about who I play music with. You gotta be real easy to hang out with.

MRR: I mean, it must keep you in it if you're down to travel to do this band.
Danny: Yeah!
Jordan: And we're super lucky. Tonight is the second time we've had someone offer to fly Danny out. People really fucking love the songs that Kris and Danny have written. I mean, that's why I wanted to be in the band! I loved that first EP. I feel super lucky. Thanks for taking a chance on me! Like ABBA.
Danny: Jabber is always my first priority band-wise. It seems really strange in hindsight that I moved away from the Bay Area, but I just couldn't hang here anymore. And I'm glad I moved away, because now I feel like I can actually afford to do things like go on tour or take time off to fly to a festival. I feel like it's opened up a lot of doors for me, but it sucks that I'm not here all the time. But I do feel like Jabber's my first priority, and I save all my best songs for Jabber. Sorry, other bands. This is the band I have the most fun

Kelly: Yeah! Especially with this group of people.
Jordan: I can't imagine a group I'd rather be cooped in a small box of farts with.

MRR: It's really cool to hear about how you all feel so comfortable with each, especially Jabber being two of you

table that are about crushes! And the '90s, of course, the two themes of this band.
Kris: It's super important to play with people you're comfortable with. It took me until moving out here to not have to settle for who I play music with. You should be able to decide that you want to be comfortable and feel safe

with, and it's the one I feel the most confident that my songs will come out sounding the best that they possibly can because we have such a good mix together. I believe in us so much!
Kelly: The distance makes it all the more special, too, because I feel like if Danny was here all the time and we played all the time, it would be great, but burn out would be a

lot easier. I wouldn't wanna get sick of Jabber, and I wouldn't wanna get sick of playing and hanging out with all of you. Having times of the year that we can go do our other band projects, work, and life stuff, but then come together to do these really fun bursts of practicing and shows and tours...
Jordan: It totally makes it more special.
Kelly: Exactly.
Jordan: It makes it extra fun. I get to be like, "I get to do this really fucking cool thing where people fly out a member of my band so we can play. OK! Life is pretty cool!"
Kelly: Life is cool!
Kris: It's an excuse to hang out!
Danny: It's great! We're a vacation band.
Kelly: "Sitting down with Jabber, it was clear how much they loved each other; they talked about it for 45 minutes straight..." *[laughter]*

MRR: I will definitely start the intro that way. Will you all tell me more about the content of your songs? It's clear the context is often about crushes!
Kris: Yeah! With this band, you know, we're not taking things too seriously. It's not a political band. We just want to write feel-good music. We write about crushes, love songs, break-up songs, a song about my childhood dog. Stuff like that, you know, silly stuff.
Danny: On the new EP, I have a song about my partner, who I like a lot. Sorry to publicly embarrass you in *Maximum Rocknroll*. There's one about the movie *Mean Girls*, where I basically just took the lyrics from the movie *Mean Girls*.

MRR: Another one about the movie *Mean Girls*?
Everyone: Oh, yeah.
Danny: The third song I wrote for the EP was on a super fucking cold day in Maine, and I wrote this song about how shit gets better. It was a very icy day and I wrote about how the ice melts, and how sometimes everything sucks, but it gets better and it'll be OK. I feel like everyone needs the occasional Danny Bailey uplifting song. One of our most popular songs, "Maybe Next Year," I wrote when I was in a real sad place, and everyone found it to be a really uplifting song, which rules!
Kelly: What I love about Jabber is that it's more about what's going on in each other's lives, and it doesn't have to take itself super seriously. It doesn't have to have a very specific message, it's just very relatable to a lot of people.
Danny: I try to be relatable. I just have a lot of feelings. I try to not mention any genders any more in any of my songs, because it'll make it way easier to translate, and also gender sucks. We've stopped playing any of the songs that mention that stuff. We want to make our songs more accessible to people, and people change. We all change.

MRR: That's a cool intentional move to make, because a lot of bands that sound like Jabber from 10-15 years ago are mostly cis-dude bands whining about how some girl broke his heart. *[laughter]*
Danny: Yeah, I'm not about that anymore.
Kelly: It's totally true. We tried to grow up a little more on this new EP, not just in gendered content, but we also don't wanna be 40 years old and singing about teenage crushes. It's a little more elevated than that, I'd like to think. There's still a lot of heart and heartbreak in it, but you don't wanna be that old person singing about prom and prom dates and stuff. That's a little cringe-worthy.
Jordan: I think this EP sounds different from our other stuff, too. Not just sonically, but also style-wise. I mean, it still sounds like Jabber, but it just sounds a little different and I like that. I don't like it when bands make the same album fourteen times in a row!

MRR: How do you think it sounds different?
Jordan: Stylistically, other than Kelly's song, it's a little bit slower, a little bit less pop punk and more just straight pop, in a good way. It's still pop punk.
Danny: It's heavily influenced by pop music.
Kris: Definitely '90s influenced. We bought a Totally Hits CD today.
Kelly: For you [Vicky]! We listened to it in the car on the way back from San Jose.
Jordan: I'd say this is EP is more Letters To Cleo's "Co-pilot."
Kelly: Such a fucking good song. And this EP has a lot of that early '60s-influenced pop beat, and Letters To Cleo obviously took a lot from that, in that song specifically. There are a lot of different references other than the very Ramones-core 2000s pop punk thing. I like that a lot. I like to hear bands evolving, and I like to be part of bands that evolve.
Danny: Thanks for making that pop beat, Kelly.
Jordan: Yeah!
Kris: This is the first EP where I'm not just playing all down strokes. *[laughter]*
Danny: The other band I'm in gets mad at me because I only know how to play down strokes. I'm like, "I'm trying!"
Jordan: Defend pop punk... *[laughter]*

MRR: I'm trying to defend pop punk within *Maximum Rocknroll*, which is why I'm interviewing you guys. *[laughter]*
Kelly: I love it.
Jordan: Thank you!
Kris: Yes!
Danny: You brave soul.
Jordan: This isn't chain punk, OK!?

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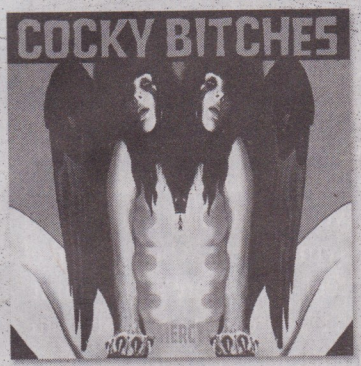

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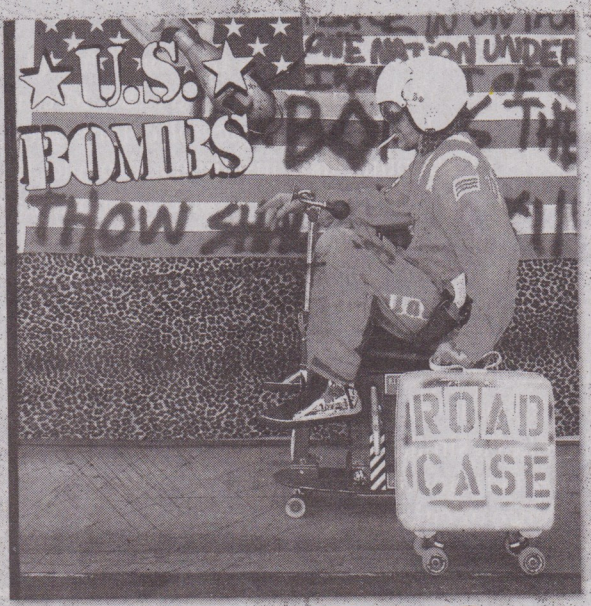

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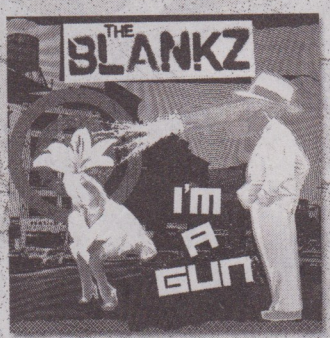

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MARRÓN

Today the geography of Marrón spans Oxnard, Hesperia, Victorville, Sacramento, New York City, and sometimes Washington, DC. The band has long struggled, in light of life's ways of shooting us in disparate directions, to maintain itself. But their sophomore LP, Terrenos, translates this dislocation into harmony. Mining everything from Swiz and Three to Sawhorse and Reason to Believe, the band takes thumbtacks and string to map a sound that is truly cross-country, holistic, and full; Revolution Summer never ended, nor did Ebullition Records ever slow down. Vocalist Fern Hernandez evokes a similar unity in the lyrics; he constellates North Americans together not by their commonality of experience or citizenship, but the bonds found in a shared humanity. The band brings to the fore intergenerational inequality, the legacy of colonization, and trauma, borders, violence, instability, struggle. But unlike the mass of today's art, Marrón does more than beg you to act: they understand why it's hard to, and they sympathize when you feel like you can't, when you feel like there's no point, when you feel like you can't "care" the nation-state out of its daily dehumanizations. Terrenos is, after all, more about consciousness than commands; less a political programme than an exploration of how this world works, what it's like to live in it, and what the next one—the better one—might look like.

Foreword by Dan Darrah.
Marrón artwork by Pavel Acevedo.
Photos by Dan Rawe.
Interview by Travis Igler.
Additional questions by Miranda Fisher.

Marrón is: Mark Ocegueda, Mike Amezcua, Fernando Hernandez, Julio Chavez and Raymon Ruiz

MRR: Maybe start by telling me how this constellation of people became Marrón.
Mike: Ray and I were trying to do something new after Descarados. We were just kinda jamming and stuff with friends, but nothing was really clicking. Then Ray met Julio, who lives near Ray, and that ended up being a good vibe. They were jamming really well. Then Ray called me up, and then as soon I knew we were going to practice and start writing songs, I called Fernando. I mean, we weren't to sure what the hell we were gonna sound like...

MRR: Right.
Mike: We knew we wanted to do something very melodic but kinda with a throwback flavor of DC style. So then we just started writing and right away recorded some demo songs. Mark is a recent addition. We had actually been toying around with the idea of inviting Mark to join the band.

MRR: Definitely, I feel that whole DC vibe, especially kinda speaks on the projects you and Ray have done before. Your record *Descarados* was kinda like Revolution Summer influenced the same with Esperanza and stuff. But with this band, are there any influences outside of the obvious Swiz influence or stuff from that era musically, or...?
Fern: I dunno, I think a lot of Bay Area stuff, right?
Raymon: I think a lot of Sarah Kirsch bands. She had a huge impact on us growing up.

MRR: Yeah, me too.
Raymon: So I mean, we just remember watching her play in her previous bands, hearing her speak and growing up in a rural area it was just mind blowing to me hearing those things. Not only her, but also seeing people like José Palofox, a Chicano playing drums in a punk band, it was very influential, at least to me.
Julio: Actually, when me and Ray met, that was the first bonding we had. We're both from the same rural area, and we both knew Sarah Kirsch bands, and to me that was just amazing.

MRR: That speaks to the other thing I wanted to talk about because I felt it was kinda obvious in watching you guys play at Gilman the other night, maybe in conversation with you a little bit Fernando, the whole thing about the scene somehow not having that whole confrontational style that it had back then as far as politics is concerned. I was wondering if you could speak on those kind of influences as well. Obviously, Sarah Krisch had a lot to say and contribute on that tip.
Fern: I think everybody here is super freakin' opinionated and has their view on it and can say so much. I was talking to Mike about seeing their bands back in the late '90s early 2000s, and that for me changed my life. To me, I see it as the experiences of people of color, historically and through colonization. And I know that's been talked about before, but like now there's all these ways to measure it, to write about it and to put it into context. I was thinking about this metaphor the other day about this this subculture is not the only subculture you can talk about these issues and politics. There're many paths that can lead you to being politicized. But for us it's kinda like a room, right, and punk is this key to that door for us, and this door opens up this other world, and it's up to us to decide what we're gonna do, walk through that door and what are we gonna do in that outside world. So now I look at it as these things in terms that are like measurable and occur in our daily lives. Each one of us is from a different location, but in many ways go through a lot of the same circumstances but in different capacities and different ways. They're from the High Desert, Hesperia and Victorville; I'm from Oxnard, an agricultural town; Mike's from South Central L.A.; and Mark is from San Bernardino. How would you describe San Bernardino?
Mark: San Bernardino is like in between, a mix of urban and rural.
Fern: There's always this fucked up shit going on with people of color. Around 2015, we saw what Donald Trump is saying and the situation in Charleston and things that have been done intentionally like issues in education, issues in health care, violence and the drug war that's going on in Latin America, infant mortality rates that happen in African-American communities, forced sterilization... it's these things that weave the way we live and our parents, the way they live. It's this historical trauma that's like tangible and exists through the work that our parents do.
Mike: As you know really well, the PCH was such an important venue that kinda came and went. But the cool thing about that space and many like them everywhere is that it's like a spark of energy and creativity were people come together. They have a shared interest but don't really know each other, and so it becomes this venue where you can really talk about ideas. I think that now, the stakes are so much higher because there's really nothing out there that promotes spaces that are independent or free of any corporate connection or free of any other oppressive institutions. I don't know what you guys were talking about the other day, but I think it was about saying something when you're playing a show, talking. That's a really amazing tradition with underground music. Not just punk, but within salsa, funk and with blues. So were just trying to return to some of that, getting some banter going. Even with social media, our attention span is so much shorter now, and we're niched into, like, our own particular things that we want, so hopefully we can disrupt that in between songs.
Mark: I think it's definitely one of the things Marrón does, that interplay between the band and the audience. Trying to network and develop ideas in these spaces and connect. I think that's something that Fern does really well. It's really inspiring to be a part of that because Fern has a gift when he's doing that, which I wish I would see more often. We were talking about that, how things seem to have gotten so complacent. There's still that musical connection you're getting, but it's not something deeper than that, with substance.

MRR: Yeah I totally felt that when you guys played. I think you did a good job, in my opinion, from what I was interpreting and what your sense of urgency was with lived experience. But you mention 2015—a lot has changed since then! Has that changed the way you approach politics in your music?
Mike: A lot has happened indeed since 2015, especially if we're referring to the election of Donald Trump, but a lot remains the same. In the culture and in policy we have had deeply-entrenched histories of anti-Blackness, anti-Latinx, anti-immigrant, anti-women, anti-Muslim, and countless other systemic attacks on people's humanity and mere existence that predate the election of Trump. There is a sense that because of him, his supporters feel more at liberty to express openly their feelings of white supremacy, xenophobia, and racial anxieties. Whether that is true or not, as a band, we feel like none of these are new developments, and that regardless of who was in office we would be speaking about these issues in our music and at our shows because these are attacks that have long been directed at our communities. With respect to being

more politically confrontational, are the stakes higher now because of the right-wing control of all branches of government? Yes, and although we share in the punk skepticism of not placing any stock in electoral politics, we also see the importance of expressing our resistance against institutions that try to erase us, dispossess us, and keep us poor.

Fern: Hmmm... this is both a complex and urgent question. Outo would call it, "Many Question, Poison Answer." I think Mike hits the nail on the head with his response. My biggest concern with this is the fine line between subculture / culture / art and other methods of expression and how these relate to policies and material conditions of people. If our music is just music, then what's the point? I think we all vary in how we think about this question, but now the bigger question is the element of "performance of politics" versus action and its impact on policy and living conditions and the role we can play in pushing that, if any. This is the facade of subculture in my opinion. It may be painful because we place so much importance on this, but if nothing changes in our daily lives, in our communities, in our families, in our health, in our emotional well being, in our environmental well being, then what was the point of that music?

I mean, we're living in the era where Jordan Peele can win an Oscar for his screenplay in *Get Out*, where Disney-Pixar produces *Coco*, where Marvel releases *Black Panther*, and we have the current political situation. So what does it mean? That's the question. And what will be the ultimate outcome? That's the question for me. Leaving me with the only answer being action that can lead to sustained change. Change we may never even live to see. And action + change is hard as hell.

MRR: It seems like the band has become even more of a long-distance project over the years. What prompted that? Has it made it harder to stay a band?

Mike: It has been hard to stay a band given all the distance between its members. I was living in South Bend for a bit and have since moved to New York City. Most of us still live in Southern California, but Mark is now living in Sacramento, also teaching. Ray and Julio are in the High Desert, Fern is in Oxnard, and all of this makes it much more difficult to play shows and remain active as a band. But we think the distance and difficulty makes everything we do that much more special to us and rewarding. The shows that we play (when we can!) really matter to us, and we still utilize them as critical spaces to dialogue with people beyond just playing our music. We realize that can come off as a bit cliché, but we really believe in DIY punk and hardcore shows still having that energy to be generative spaces leading to more creative action. We intend to keep Marrón active and around to the best of our abilities and hopefully we can find time on the calendar to play some shows and do a small tour.

Fern: The spaces we occupied or occupy as people are essential to our world view and anything else we are involved in, right? I mean, we've all had multiple conversations about this. Southern California occupies an interesting place in US history; however, so does Chicago, a place Mike has written extensively about. Mark writes about San Bernardino, analyzing its own history and development. Mike is originally from South Central L.A., Julio from Compton to Hesperia, Ray from Santa Ana to Victorville, and me up in Oxnard. So in our lyrics, conversations, space and our relation to space is important. So our friend Dan, who wrote up the intro to this interview, highlighted this by mentioning it. Mike wrote a short piece for Dan's fanzine, *Terrarium*, where he relates the foundational impact of Fugazi on him as a youngster, and guess what? Mike describes, in vivid picturesque detail, how the track "Sieve-Fisted Find" was a kind of soundtrack by which he experienced and traversed the complicated, racialized terrain of Los Angeles. This is a great example of what Marrón is.

MRR: When you guys explained that song "Capital" at Gilman, I thought there was a lot of thoughtfulness going on and what those lyrics were about, and I was wondering if you guys come up with that through a collective process and write all the lyrics, or do you guys share them with each other or...?

Mike: Yeah, it's collective. Sometimes Ray will have a subject that he really wants to hash out in a song, Julio will tell us something, so Fern and I will get together and try and work out songs in that

way, taking what the band wants to talk about as a collective, and then we just work them out through the chorus and figure it out. I mean at the end of the day it's still a punk song, a hardcore song. "Capital," it's kind of has a Gray Matter feel to it, very DC very anthemic. So it's a mix about trying to deliver a powerful message that we care about and making it sound good with the music.

Fern: We joke around a lot. I mean, we're not like super serious. I mean, we talk about those things in the lyrics, but at the same time I think it's important to be conscious. Something about hardcore when it becomes politicized, it becomes this thing that's very strict, and the standard becomes very high, right? But we're imperfect, it's hard, it's a process. It's a process to try and be a better person. You can be listening to the best records, you're eating a certain way and acting a certain way, but it's still hard to do. We live in these different worlds and have different realities and those things seep into us and they hurt us or they stress us out physically, emotionally, and mentally. The other day, we were joking and having a lot of fun in the van, but at the same time we take it back and talk about serious things in our own lives then that seep into the lyrics and what we wanna talk about.

Julio: That's one of the things I like about our band is that I feel these are my brothers. We all come from Mexican families, and that's one thing that kinda bonds us together and helps us write in a very intimate way.

Mike: That reminds me of the first questioned you asked, which is a good question but it's also the question for *MRR*: "How did you guys start?" Another thing that got us going initially was that there are so many bands that we love, and we try and model ourselves after a certain sound, a lot of bands do that. One of our things was like, "What if this band played like this but spoke about ghettos and barrios?" or Ray would be like, "I love that music, but I wish they talk about having a shitty ass wage job and having all these family responsibilities." So it's kind of meshing that all the bands do it, some bands do it some better than others. I know a lot the bands that you were in would also do it. I think that was a spark for us is that, like Julio was saying, we all come from Mexican immigrant families, Mexican-American families, so for us it was like, we love Revolution Summer stuff, but I also wish we could also talk about other stuff.

Raymon: That whole Revolution Summer era we love. We connect to it musically. But there's that connection that we need past music. That's why me and Mike always wanted to do a band like that, that style I guess, but connect with other young Brown folk...

Fern: Hopefully other folks of color.

Mark: Everyone.

Fern: Yeah, everyone. Anyone who is down for this.

MRR: Those have been the most powerful bands to me. The ones you can relate to on both planes. Otherwise it's just some internalized shit, or you're reading lyrics and it's like you're reading a textbook...

Mike: Exactly.

MRR: So it makes it a little harder to relate sometimes. I mean if that's what I'm hearing from you guys?

Mike: Totally, you got it right. It's like, sometimes we're trying to communicate shit that's complicated but in a way that is relatable, so sometimes it's like, "how do you talk about capitalism without doing a typical Profane Existence...?" I mean, we can scream "fuck the pigs!" and things like that, but I guess we're trying to do it in a different way.

MRR: Did your approach to songwriting change in the time leading up to your most recent album, *Terrenos*? It's clear that the band puts so much thought into the meaning of its songs. Is there anything you wanted to do differently, musically or lyrically, with this album?

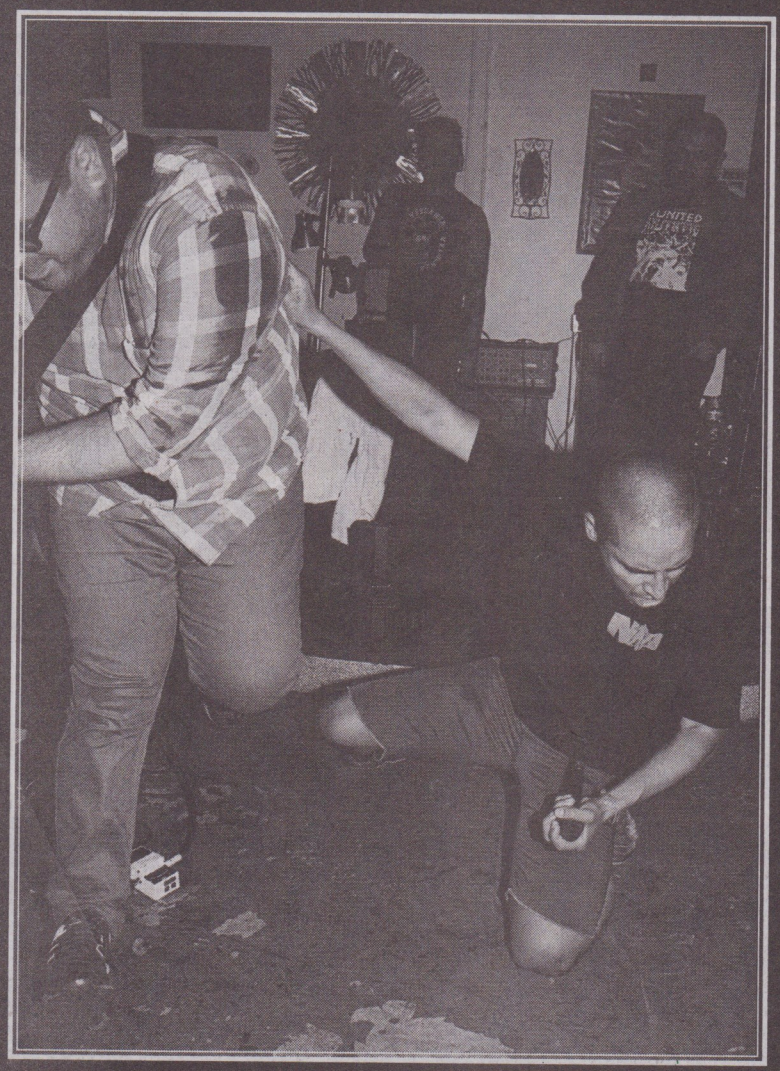
Mike: We're not sure if our approach to songwriting changed except to say that we kept writing songs non-stop well after our first 12" on Take it Back. Sometimes our songs got pieced together over digital communication (email, voice memos), and other times inside a jam room. We did put a lot of thought into the writing of *Terrenos*, from the music to the lyrics, themes, and art. In some ways, it's an outgrowth of our first 12", in that the music still has that throwback feel of the melodic styles of the later 1980s and early 1990s that we like. For instance, a song like "Take" that has a bit of a DC-style, groovy tempo to it, could have easily been on our first 12" and fit right in with those tracks. But this time we were able to include a little more variety in the album. We have tracks that are much faster—such as "Embers"—and much slower than our usual tempo such as "Trauma." We threw in a few early tracks from our first demo that we wanted to revamp. Lyrically, *Terrenos* encapsulates issues and themes that remain important

to us personally and collectively. Songs about gentrification, displacement, mental health, legacies of generational traumas caused by colonialism, racism, poverty, and incarceration. The cover art is the work of a very talented artist from Oaxaca based out of Riverside, California named Pável Acevedo who also did our first 12". He's got his own style, and we really like it. Band albums are interesting projects because they involve the wishes and aspirations of so many people with their own ideas of what it ought to be. We think *Terrenos* is no different in that regard in that it is the end product of five different people coming together to make music and express ideas that we care about. Sometimes it's fragmented, and sometimes it's more of a unified vision. We hope that listeners hear something that speaks to them, and that's satisfying enough to us.

Fern: I think the most important thing in this band is the action behind the creation and vice versa. It's inspired by lived experience. Another amazing element was how we all coincided and met each other and the process that led to this. Our friend Marco cites the "Law of Attraction!" *[laughter]* I mean, our dream was to find each other, to a certain degree! For one, it seems hard to find people who like this DC style, let alone people who have the same sensibilities, with similar life experiences. So that all went into the songwriting process. Ray calling "Embers" an Insted style song, Mark citing Inside Out, me referring to Rain, Mike channeling Fugazi, and so on. Then we'd talk about experiences we've had, whether these were from growing up, our family histories, our daily work, our communities, etc. We'd chat about myriad topics, from multiple perspectives, as different members are involved in different community and/or academic projects and endeavors. So even before the lead-up to *Terrenos*, our experiences / knowledge shaped the lyrics, and our love for this specific manifestation of hardcore punk shaped the music. All of this going on within the broader political context. I mean, I recall all of us texting in our group chat during the presidential debate.

MRR: What's next for the band? It seems like y'all are determined to stay a band in spite of geographical difficulties. What does that mean for the future of the band? Are you still able to write songs, record, play live?

Mike: We have every intention of keeping Marrón alive and playing shows in the coming year. Our music is more accessible online now thanks to our friend Marco from Advanced Perspective, who helped put our music on some streaming sites. We've been talking about doing another record. Ray and Julio remain quite active in their communities with respect to playing music and putting on shows. They are part of a collective called C47 who put on shows for local and touring bands out in the High Desert. They have a new project (A|WAY) and have recently decided to start documenting the growth of their local scene through a 7" comp that is in the works.



MRR: Anything I missed?

Fern: My only thing is that people remember of what's at stake. My parents don't wanna go back to their home state because there are people that are hung on trees and overpasses, heads that are chopped off because of cartel violence that's supported by the US. It's like our parents can't even go back to where they were born because of this violence and here in the inner cities and what's going on with policing. All this messed up stuff is not some abstract thing you'd get from a Discharge record or something, but this is very real thing that's happening before us. For us to do this as just entertainment...I mean, I love buying records, it's fun, I love moshing and dancing, but then I remind myself there's gotta be a little something more. Also it's about being gentle with people. I love a lot of bands that are badass hardcore, but it's be not being like "you're badass but you don't sing about that." I mean, I use to be like that...

Mark: ...but you got your own voice and bands to do that. If no one else is doing it, you gotta do it.

Releases:
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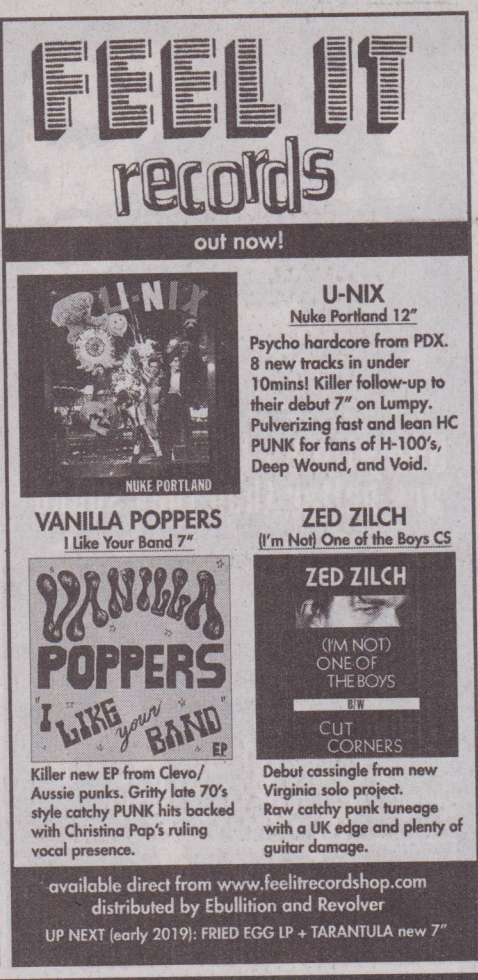
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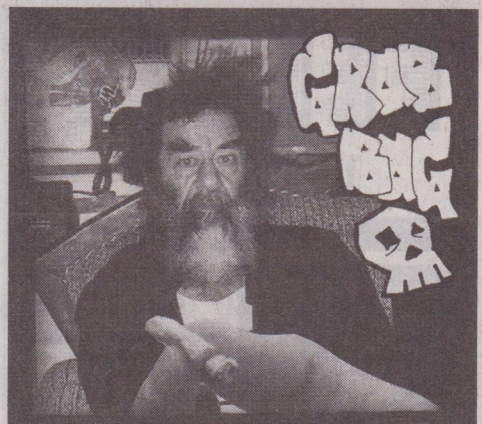

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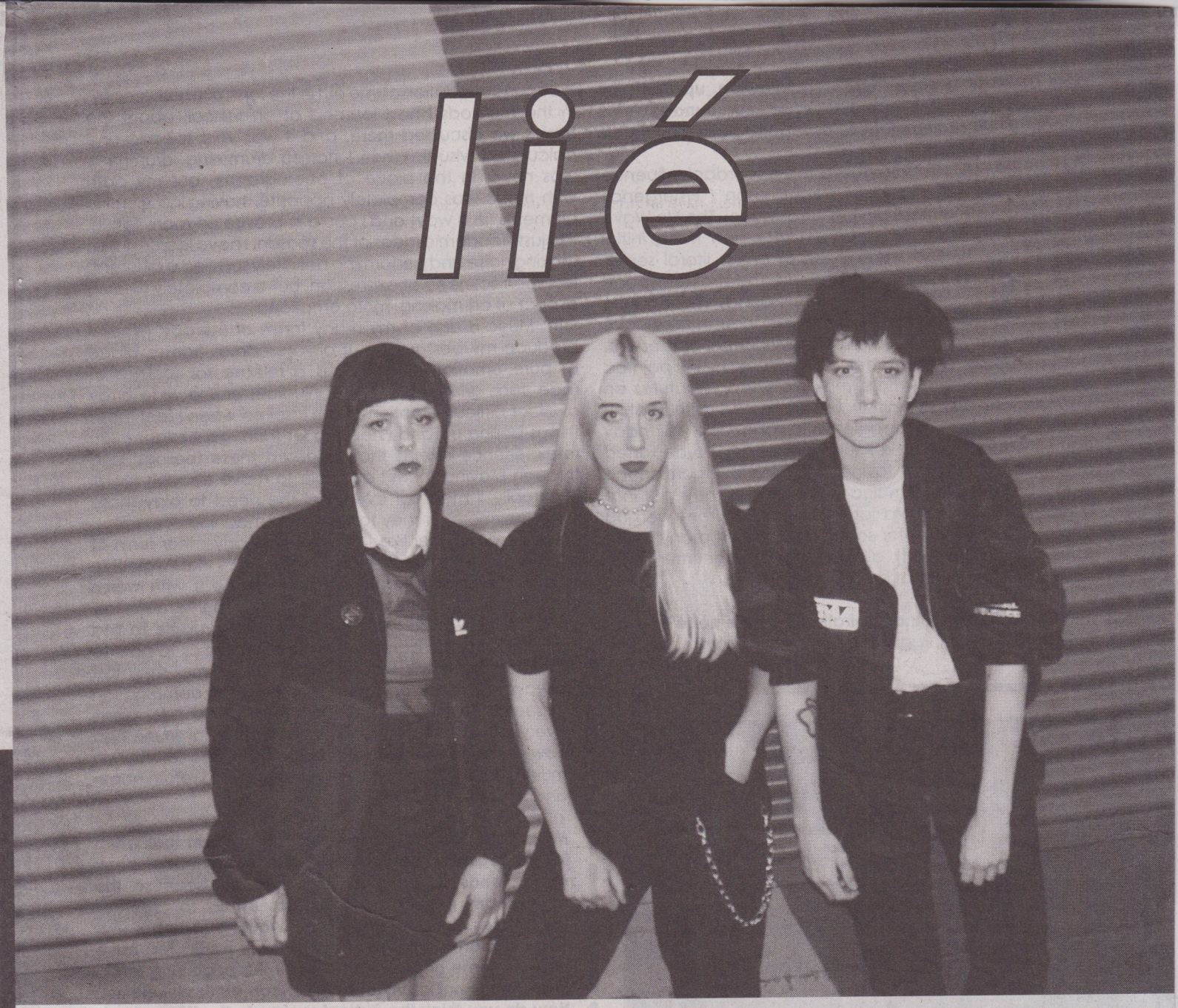

Hailing from Vancouver, BC, the powerful noisemongers of Lié play an ultra-intense take on Cold Punk while singing about issues of the "dark matter" that lies beneath the Emerald City they call home (and beyond). I first got into the band when I saw them in a basement in Vancouver several winters ago and I've been following them ever since. Read on to learn about their near-encounter with a UFO on tour, life in Vancouver in a wave of brutal gentrification, music as a means of therapy and survival, the effects of fascism on music, and the freedom found within electronic music.

Interview by Megan March.

Photos by Andi Icaza and Lauren Ray.

MRR: *Hounds* is your third LP, following up *Truth or Consequences* and *Consent*. How has your sound evolved over time? What experiences as a band have influenced this change, if at all?

Ash: Over time, we have fused the discordant influence of Vancouver's earlier days (Night Prison / Emergency Room era) with a more driving, heavy, feel. The No Wave influences that drove No LA Kill (me and Kati's initial project together) are employed in a less literal sense, while still driving towards dissonance. The strained space that the lyrics create, is different on *Hounds*, more gentle than on *Truth or Consequences* even though they have deal with content matter related to violence, oppression, and generally dark matter. Some folks have pointed out that we employ more melodic vocal structures on *Hounds*, and we definitely experimented with that. It almost became a struggle with songs like "Birthday Party," where we weren't sure if it needed to be toned down, but ended up loving it. I think our confidence in the band, be it from finally deciding to never fit into a genre, having record label support, or from working successfully together for so many years on many levels (music / booking / art), allows for us to experiment with various sounds and not be too tied down.

MRR: Where do you find inspiration to make noise?

Kati: Before I was integrated in the music community, my ideas and inspiration came out in the form of photography, in the methods I had learned at art school, about the topics we discussed there, and it was very specific and calculated, visual. When I started drumming, drumming was never in the place of photography, but my path with music was completely opposite, having no specific elements (in a way) and I could improvise on many levels, not just academic ideas of the season. I have learned that making noise and performing definitely satisfied a different, less specific, need of expression, but a completely fulfilling aspect of art making, more emotional.

Britt: Music is one of my many forms of therapy. When I produce my best writing, it always comes from a place of pure emotion. It becomes a release for feelings of rage, fear, grief, uncertainty, injustice, and a wide array of other difficult emotions. I am inspired when I feel these things boiling up and I need to let them go. I might even re-experience events that triggered these feelings, and through playing them I am able to move through them. Eventually, I may not even feel the need to play those songs anymore, or they take on new meanings.

Ashlee: I don't feel like I've ever had any other form of expression aside from making noise. It's the way I've learned to communicate my feelings, be it with words or sound. But inspiration is not infinite, and I've definitely gone through some low periods where I struggle to find inspiration. I don't actually have an answer as to how to overcome that block, though...I do find one time I'm almost always inspired is on tour. I feel like it's a combination of seeing new bands every night and driving for hours every day listening to a collection of familiar music and new gems, all the while not having the time to work on music yourself. It always makes me eager to return home and try out new ideas.

MRR: It's a personal observation on my part that when fascist regimes rise in power and prominence, punk music tends to go more underground because the mainstream media is looking for music to "soothe" the masses. On a related note, I would also argue that large western countries (Amerikkka in particular) have been to some degree fascist since the beginning, and I know this is not a uniquely American punk viewpoint... How do you think the current regime in the US contrasts with what's been happening in Canada, and what are your thoughts on punk's musical accessibility in terms of broader political climates?

Kati: Maybe this is why Lié isn't in regular distribution channels? Our politics are too challenging and we are suppressed by the tentacles of the fascist systems?

Right now I go through waves of aggression against the privilege that I see so much of it in punk that I am, at times, truly disgusted. Then I remember that huge moves have been made against sexual assault in multiple Vancouver music scenes and I remember that we are working on our slow, broken selves, which is progress, even if we can't fix capitalism. I see growth in the advances of callout culture and am so happy that it is generally accepted that making a call out is necessary, but expulsion and exclusion is not the answer, community healing is needed.

Britt: I agree that Western countries have been fascists

since the beginning, especially considering Canada is founded on the systematic genocide of tens of thousands of Indigenous people and continues to oppress minority groups through the "justice," education, and economic systems put in place by colonialism. In contrast to the current "in your face fascism" of the US (specifically thinking of the Trump administration and the Muslim ban for example), I think Canadian systems like to try and mask the racist ideologies and oppressive tendencies in bureaucratic jargon, and economics (cramming through unwanted pipelines for example). I think that because we aren't producing easily digestible music, it's never going to be music that is accessible in any mainstream way, but I do like to think that the messages we put out into the ether with our music are landing somewhere, and creating conversations that can extend out into that broader political climate (beyond the border and the mountains that encase Vancouver).

MRR: You all play in other projects, please tell us about them! Also, some of your other projects include electronic music...how does the mode of electronic expression differ from the acoustic quality of drums / bass / guitar?
Britt: I've played in Koban (post-punk with drum machines) for almost ten years and, more recently, SIGSALY (dance music influenced by techno, minimal-wave, industrial). I find I enjoy creating electronic music because it lifts and liberates me. The creative possibilities seem endless, and that is exciting. I've always needed to move and been very in my body, and it just feels good to be making music where I can do that, and that encourages others to do the same. Programming, producing, and learning about new equipment has also been an exciting new challenge.
Ashlee: I have an electronic project with my partner called Minimal Violence. I've been lucky enough to have lots of opportunity to tour with this project and see places I never imagined I would. A big part of electronic music to me is the community and culture that surround it. There is a focus on knowledge exchange and celebration of difference that, to be honest, I have never really felt in the punk community. Also, on the other end of the spectrum, electronic music allows me the freedom to create from beginning to end without having to work with any outside sources. It can be a completely independent form of music. In that way, it almost feels more punk than punk. I can make music out of any sound I want, use any machine I want, even throw some guitar in there, and I don't need to go to a studio or work with a recording engineer.
Kati: I play in a queer female punk band called SBDC. SBDC is shopping around a newly recorded full length album. Recorded at Raincity Recorders in Vancouver by Jesse Gander and is waaay power pop. With a band member newly located in Chatanooga, TN, we are looking forward to a southern tour!

MRR: You've done some touring in Europe as well as Canada and the US. Got any good tour stories?
Kati: There's been so much traveling as of late that the tours are all blending together now. *[laughter]* We'd like to release a book one day.

On our first long tour to SXSW in 2014, we played a show in Marfa, TX, which was all very surreal and amazing. Lié

was touring with Koban, so it was me, Ash, Brit, and Sam all driving my dad's pickup truck. We made a mysterious stop at a local mini-mart at one point in the land of Dollar-General-is-the-grocery-store and truck high tumbleweeds. Ash bought a disposable camera, which had mysterious crystalized powder shaking around inside it. (It also had been taped together by hand with a clearly ancient exposed roll of film that didn't match the brand shoddily installed into the plastic camera body.) After what was most likely an unnecessary bout of paranoia, we ditched the camera in a roadside trash can...the pics would have probably been sick, though. We drove on and arrived in Marfa dazed from driving hours south out of Austin. It was St. Patrick's Day weekend, so the locals were bar hopping and down to cut a rug. The venue was called Padre's, which was an old mortuary, re-fashioned into a long bar across from a stage. The bathrooms were the old embalming room, and the funerals seemed to have been held in the main show room. It had a sacred feeling with two-story-high ceilings. The show was great, and one of the attendees at the show was a tall older gentleman with long white hair and beard. He happened to also be wearing all white: white cowboy boots, white jeans, white button up shirt, and a white cowboy hat (maybe a white vest too?). I wanted to say hello and check if he was a real wizard, but he disappeared into the night. Lots of people at the show told us about the Marfa Lights, so we decided to go check it out after the show with a few folks who were still kicking it. We decided to camp out at the Marfa Lights viewing area and quickly hit the road in the morning. We watched the spooky inexplicable lights move

up and down the silhouette of a hill in the distance and had a beer, then set up a tent for me and Ash to crash out and Brit and Sam slept in the car. About two hours later a bright light and the loudest most intense noises of metal on metal woke up everyone but me. Was it the UFO that we all assumed would take us tonight, if any time? Nope, it was a freight train flying down the tracks about 30 or 40 feet from us. Because it was so dark, we hadn't even seen the tracks. Next morning we groggily headed to look at the Prada Marfa store, dusty and sun baked and perfectly out of place. We continued to Las Cruces, NM to play a venue by more train tracks...

Our first East Coast tour was with Surfbort in July 2016 and it was the coldest tour (besides the snow in Flagstaff, twice). I got a stomach flu on the day we left NY for our second show, and everyone intermittently caught it. On one particular winding section of the road, I got that feeling where you lose control of your jaw. I was gonna puke, but when? I knew I had no control, but maybe I could find a bag...nope. Just projectile vomit fest. It was mostly water but it did manage to get on the Surfbort merch tupperware. And it leaked. All over a Large "Penis Picasso" t-shirt, which was then given to me as a memento of our new bond with one of my favorite bands. Last time I wore the shirt, I got two compliments.

While on this tour, we were taken to visit the GWAR prop house and studio where they make all the stage pieces and costumes for live GWAR shows. There were Donald Trump and a Hillary Clinton statues and so much gory fun stuff to look at.

MRR: Last time I was up in Vancouver, our bands played together at an explicitly radical DIY space called the Black Lab, which reminded me a lot of squats and other autonomous spaces in Europe (particularly Germany). Can you talk about the space and its importance to the neighborhood it's in? How are you all involved? Are there other spaces like the Lab in Vancouver now?

Britt: The Black Lab is unique in Vancouver in that it is completely volunteer run and non-profit. It's also one of the few places in the city that can host early shows (no punk time) where people will actually show up. (Sound ordinance forces Black Lab to be done music by 11 pm, when shows normally are just getting started by that time.) We have played there many times, and sometimes book events for touring bands. It's an amazing crew of people who are dedicated to the scene. They host events that impact the downtown east side community, such as Narcan training, fundraisers, and all the shows are sliding scale. We love Black Lab!!!

MRR: Gentrification is a force that seems to be affecting every major city right now, but I've heard it's hitting Vancouver particularly hard. How has your scene coped with it?

Britt: Spaces get closed down on the regular, and people are broke from having to spend all their money on rent. There has been an exodus. People are being forced to move to cheaper cities like Montreal. However, Vancouver is resilient. Whenever a space shuts down people band together and another one rises from the ashes. Electronic music and synth / drum machine based bands are on the rise. Possibly because there is no space to keep your drum kit and practice spaces are not cheap? (I'm only half kidding here!)

Kati: Friends in Dead Soft (Arts and Crafts) have moved into the deep suburbs before they begin a few month long tour to save on rent, with an hour and a half commute daily for work, each way. Other friends happily moved away for more nature and less traffic and bought a Prius for the few trips to Vancouver that they do make.

Vancouver is uniquely walkable and dense, for the 1% who live in penthouse condos. The early 2000s teachings of urban densification dictated a lot of design of tall residential towers along the picturesque seawall parks and dog parks downtown with walkable neighborhoods, but these are all for the 1% that the tourists see while driving though on the way to Whistler. The infrastructure of the city is not sound for the population that it holds, even in the rich areas. Police and Parks Board enforcement officers move homeless people out of the view of the rich temporary workers who come to Vancouver for six months before moving away. The only saving grace for the people who live in the downtown towers is that a good portion of those condominiums sit empty due to the major investment force of people from across the world who purchased condos for part-time living in safe, quaint Vancouver (or for part of the family). In the poor areas, bedbugs are rampant and houses are illegally divided into multiple suites. People who work low wage jobs can't afford to live in the communities where they work, nor pay for their children's needs, just like gentrification all over the world. This also causes some of our friends to head to the Tar Sands in Alberta to make money to afford to live in

Vancouver. Working in the oil industry is very dangerous.
Ashlee: I feel resilience is Vancouver's artist badge. Artists here have always worked under the weight of impending evictions and the stress of balancing the amount you need to work to be able to create in this city. You can hear it in the sound. There's an edge that it creates that is authentic to the experience of living in a city that regards its lower class as disposable.

MRR: The PNW (US cities and Vancouver) have a particular dark punk sound...I'm thinking of bands like Arctic Flowers, Criminal Code, Nü Sensae (RIP)...Do you feel you fit into this oeuvre? Or do you identify more with something else or a different scene?
Britt: Yes, I would say we fit into that category of sound and scene. We refer to that element of our sound as Cold Punk. It's a particular feel that I think is derived from the landscape, rain, and perhaps feelings of isolation. Other bands I would include here are Mutators and Stickers. We also have a love for, and seek inspiration from, the gritty, southern punk sound of bands like Ex-Cult, Institute, and Nots (one reason why we keep ending up touring and with records recorded/put out in Texas.) This has had an influence on our latest record, *Hounds*.

MRR: On your past two records, you've dealt with issues of sexual violence, the personal and political...What was your lyrical vision for *Hounds*? What you do envision people hearing / feeling when they listen to the new record?
Britt: *Hounds* is about inspiring a feeling of empowerment: the power to fight back against racist, misogynist, and economically oppressive systems. It's about pointing a finger and sneering at abusers and those who abuse power. Reminding them that we are not passive bystanders to injustice. With this record, I want people to feel energized, invigorated, and powerful...and I also want them to be able to just enjoy the music.

MRR: I'm really into your song, "Ethics," especially the lines, *"Fragility oh you're a saint / Pity he, blood on your face / My ethics they're running late / Twist my arm, initiate."* What are your thoughts behind this song?
Britt: I've always enjoyed writing songs that can have multiple meanings or levels of meaning. I think it is more fun to leave the direct meaning up to the listener. I like to work with themes and allow for the specifics to be decided by each individual. This song deals with themes of gender expectations and Western cultural expectations of gender conformity. It also deals with themes of power imbalances and abuses, specifically within organized religion. These were the topics I was thinking about while writing the song.

MRR: What are your future plans for Lié?
Kati: Right now we are back in writing mode. It feels like we have been non-stop touring, so getting back into the rhythm of writing is feeling a bit daunting. We'd love to tour Mexico, Latin America, and South America! Hopefully starting in Mexico City. We are about to film our third music video for *Hounds* and are very excited to work with our friend Justin Gradin from Sex Negatives, Mutators, and Random Cuts. We'd also like to return to Europe!
Ashlee: Touring can be pretty draining and although hearing new bands provides inspiration, without any time to jam it can be hard to focus on writing, so I'm excited to take the winter to just spend time in the studio working on new ideas. Also really excited to be in a jam space with heat for the first time ever this winter!!

MRR: What local bands in Vancouver are grabbing your ear right now?
Kati: We played show on August 16th at the Black Lab with some local favourites, Kiss Painting and Chain Whip in support of Masculinity Crisis from Seattle. Newer locals that are catching our ear are Crumb, Body Break, Wire Spine, Necking, Little Sprout, Policy of Truth, and Wasted Breath in Vancouver, Cyberplasm in Olympia.

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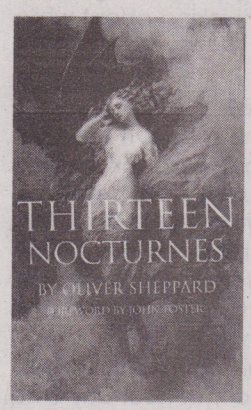


Thirteen Nocturnes
By Oliver Sheppard
Ikonograph Press, 2018
257 pages|$13.00

Oliver Sheppard's *Thirteen Nocturnes* is an overly ambitious collection of forlorn poetry that struggles under the weight of its own bloat and repetition. The poems repeat the same themes and images over and over and over and over and *over* again. That said, I would like to take a moment to note that the quality of the writing wasn't in itself bad. Clearly, Sheppard is a studied poet and knows his craft well. It was just the repetition of the same content that drove me nuts. The overarching theme, as the title *Thirteen Nocturnes* suggests, is night and darkness, including a fixation with deep space and black holes. The collection is also liberally slathered in all the usual high school goth clichés including the occult, demonology, flowers, blood (and the color red), Hell (or, as Sheppard anachronistically refers to it, Gehenna), isolation, alcoholism, quotes from the film *Hellraiser*, shadows, death (both the act of dying as well as Death personified), and of course the color black. These images are trotted out in the collection ad nauseam. Sheppard hammers them into the reader again and again until that which should be potent and thought provoking begins to lose all meaning, like when you repeat the same word to yourself to the point that it becomes an abstraction and is no longer connected to the idea it is supposed to represent. It just becomes noise. The villainous, threatening black holes gaping in the heavens and melancholy nights birthing Death flatten out into background static, one poem bleeds indecipherably into the next, and the cosmic despair coalesces into cosmic tedium.

The book is also too damn long. The four sections of the book (Thirteen Nocturnes, The Void Cantos, Death & Death's Mirror, and The Dark Corridor to Heaven) could have and should have been published as four standalone chapbooks. Were the sections to exist as singular works, I believe they would be more effective, but piled on top of each other, the poems become taxing, and then, due to the over exposure to the constant deluge of stygian musings, I found that I started to become numb to it and then indifferent. Less is indeed more, especially when your subject matter is so lugubrious that it tends to veer towards the hermetic. Adding further to the bloat are a prologue, a foreword written by John Foster (a peer of Sheppard's), and an introduction by Sheppard himself.

While excess and obsessiveness can work in poetry, I found that here they are counterproductive and work against the collection. Sheppard's excess denies his readers any breathing room to fully digest his overwrought content. Even the most gothy of goth bands, like Sopor Aeternus & the Ensemble of Shadows, occasionally break up the references to Poe, vampires, the underworld, and despair with moments of humor in tracks like "A Little Bar of Soap" or "The Urine Song." Similarly, the experimental, apocalyptic folk band Current 93 also counterbalance the obsessive Crowley references, misery, and hallucinations of apocalypse by name checking characters from children's books like Enid Blyton's Noddy or using Louis Wain's adorable cat paintings as album art, and at times David Tibet has offered up some rather hopeful lyrics and images. Even Anne Sexton, who worked with suicide and depression like some artists work with clay, showed a sense of humor in her work on occasion. Sheppard, however, offers no such respite from his nihilism much to his detriment. Without an equipoise to the extreme darkness, it is hard for me to feel the gravity of the darkness if I am never given a glimpse of the light that has been lost. Sheppard's poetry just plunges straight down into the depths of the abyss, never bothering to even approximate the reason for the plunge.

The eponymous Thirteen Nocturnes only comprise around 60 pages of the 257-page collection. At the end of the series Sheppard provides his "Notes for Thirteen Nocturnes," which are a couple pages of quotes from the works that influenced/informed the poems. It really added nothing to the collection for me. As if I couldn't divine from the poems themselves that the author is aping Poe, Blake, Milton, and death rock acts such as Rudimentary Peni. It also served to deflate the poems, much like a magician performing a series of tricks and then coming right back out onto the stage to explain how he conjured up each one. It's redundant, but redundancy, like night and death, seems to be in Sheppard's wheelhouse. In addition to regularly quoting his gloomy heroes, Sheppard, for some reason, also liberally quotes himself. The collection is lousy with quotes pulled from his own poems, junking up the book and making it longer than it needs to be. As a reader, I couldn't wrap my head around the reason that Sheppard felt the need to insert quotes from the poem I just finished on the following page. It really gave me the impression that Sheppard was worried that the reader wasn't going to "get it" unless they are bashed over the head with the same ideas and even the same damn lines of poetry again and again and again. I suspect that the foreword by Foster and Sheppard's introduction were also born out of this same insecurity, i.e. the author was so anxious that his readers won't be able to grasp the poems on their own he felt compelled to explain exactly how you should read them, and oh yeah, in case you missed the pivotal line in the poem you just read, well here it is again in giant type on the next page.

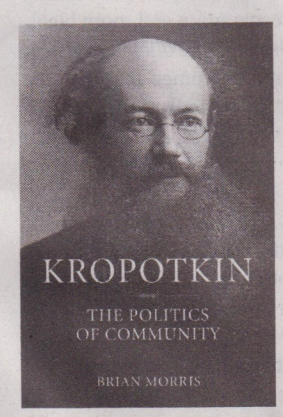
After the cycle of the titular poems end, we venture into the Void Cantos, a series of poems mostly preoccupied with outer space and cosmic calamity. Poems with titles such as "The Dead Star Wheel," "War Universe," "Death Universe," "Abyss," "The Pale Vortex," "The Dead Star Around Which We All Revolve," etc., you get the idea. One of the poems in this section, "Canto of 99942-Apophis," deserves to be singled out because it has the unique distinction of being the most solipsistic poem I have ever read. According to Sheppard's preamble before the poem (which is another instance of bloat and Sheppard over explaining himself), 99942-Apophis is a giant asteroid that astronomers predicted would hit the earth on Friday the 13th 2029, but revised calculations now show that there is zero chance of impact. Sheppard then spends the entirety of the poem imploring 99942-Apophis to "destroy us" and to "smash us." Admittedly, this is the exact turning point when I moved from reading the book with an open mind to reading completely against the grain. I myself am bipolar and I still struggle with depression and

suicidal ideation on the regular, and even to me, the idea of penning an invocation begging a killer asteroid to "wreck us" because your own fucked up brain chemistry has tainted your world view comes across as profoundly petulant and selfish. Sure, the world deserves to be destroyed because you are depressed. Right, buddy, because only you and your pain matter, no one else needs to be considered? You hurt, so everyone and everything needs to be nuked into oblivion? Right. After this poem, I went from giving this collection a chance, hoping that it would improve, to abandoning all hope and resigning myself to the reality that what I was holding in my hands was nothing more than a highfalutin version of the same angsty crap hundreds of black-clad teenagers scribble in their notebooks whilst sulking in the back of algebra class. Adding to my frustration, the Void Cantos are also one of the longest sections of the book, clocking in at close to 80 pages. It was a lot of trench coat mafia bullshit to slog through.

In the book's penultimate section, Death & Death's Mirror, Sheppard mostly turns his gaze from the heavens back down to earth. These poems are populated with images of gallows, vampires, silent film stars such as Theda Bara, haunted houses, and, weirdly enough, Michel Foucault's book *Discipline and Punish*, which charts the birth of the modern penal system. This section also features a heavy dose of Sheppard's usual tropes including a Milton-esque Lucifer, Death, Hell, and black flowers. In the final section of the book, The Dark Corridor to Heaven, Sheppard shockingly offers a series of poems with a rather novel premise. The genesis of these poems, as Sheppard explains in one of the only notes that actually serves to illuminate the text, came from his enjoyment of checking art books out of the library. Specifically, art books with the image of the art on plates which are then pasted in the book with a brief narrative explaining the image. According to Sheppard, these plates are sometimes missing in older books, having been pried off the page, leaving just the narrative and the reader left to wonder what was in the image. Sheppard uses this framework to build a sequence of poems that serve as the narrative to nonexistent art plates. Sadly, the innovation ends with that framework. The content of poems themselves feature Sheppard's all too familiar subjects of death, destruction, deep space, and Biblical allusions over and over and again and again and again.

Hopefully for his next collection Sheppard will learn how to pare down the bloat, show more restraint in the editing process, come to the realization that sometimes less is in fact more, and vary his subject matter rather than forcing more of the same moody, trite darkness down our throats.

—Aaron Nielsen



Kropotkin: The Politics of Community
By Brian Morris
PM Press, 2018
320 pages | $24.95

This book affirms the modern academic and political relevance of the revolutionary Peter Kropotkin, nicknamed the "anarchist prince" as a former noble who renounced his title in turn-of-the-century Russia. The author Brian Morris says that Kropotkin and his work are neglected by scholars of complementary topics. While Kropotkin's book *The Conquest of Bread* is a classic in the anarchist canon, it is the only text in his prolific career that is regularly discussed in the academic world and radical circles.

Morris is a Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at Goldsmiths College in London. He has written other books on the anthropology of religions, the social lives of animals, and Mikhail Bakunin, an anarchist contemporary of Kropotkin. The author sought to write clearly and accessibly in the tradition of Kropotkin, who as a scientist, political theorist, and geographer minimized bourgeois academic language in his work. For the most part Morris succeeds even if academic-isms like casual references to "radical neo-Kantian dualism" slip in. While this book may have more jargon than the author intended, it refrains from devolving into stuffy academia and remains accessible to a determined layperson willing to periodically conduct a web search for some of the more obscure terms.

Prefacing with a brief biography of Kropotkin, the meat of the book is broken into four parts: theory, social ecology, pre-anarchism historical studies, and anarchism. The theory section describes Kropotkin's anarchist communism and addresses common objections to anarchism. Morris quotes Kropotkin: "When we ask for the abolition of the state, we are always told that we dream of a society composed of men better than they are in reality. But no, a thousand times, no. All we ask is that men should not be made worse than they are, by such institutions." Harsh punishments do not result in a reduction in crime, but economic disparity increases it. Prisons do not deter crime but make prisoners less able to rejoin society. While people should not be permitted to wreak violence on others, why should a state have the right to eliminate diseased minds through execution for the crime of being ill? The popularity of this line of thinking continues to grow as the modern movement for prison abolition gains traction.

The section this reviewer enjoyed the most was on social ecology. Morris uses the work of Kropotkin and observations of the natural world to justify social collaboration. The effort for collective benefit is referred to as "mutual aid" and is in stark contrast with the fierce competition advocated for by capitalism's apologists. Mutual aid occurs not in spite of evolution but as a product of it.

Some remember Kropotkin as an idealist, but the author disagrees; he knew that society, as in ecology, is an ever-changing web of conflict. He does not envision a static Eden but a perpetually shifting equilibrium. From thermodynamics to modern America, every system teeters back and forth to seek balance. The anarchist society of Kropotkin's visions is the same.

In the historical studies section of the book, the author discusses historical influences on anarchism like the French Revolution. Kropotkin possessed a lifelong fascination with the French Revolution. He did not consider the Paris Commune true anarchy but a "first sketch." Scholars often consider the French Revolution to be a "bourgeois revolution," but Kropotkin emphasized the peasant uprisings that ended the system of feudal rights and the "sections" of the Paris Commune that oversaw the distribution of bread. The term "anarchist" originated during the revolution, coined as an insult. French revolutionary figure Count Mirabeau denounced his title to assist the revolters, inspiring Kropotkin to do the same. The author suggests that Kropotkin's lifelong affection for France influenced his decision to permanently alienate his anarchist peers by supporting the Allies in the First World War. Indigenous life was also an influence on anarchist thinking. One of the virtues of Kropotkin over his Marxist contemporaries is that his assessment of states around the world does not devolve into pro-colonialist rhetoric. He also resists the glossy romanticization of indigenous life exhibited by Rousseau.

While some disparage the revolutionary as another starry-eyed anarchist idealist, the author argues against dismissive misinterpretations of his work. He writes:

> *Anyone who sides with the oppressed, who critiques the present status quo, or who offers suggestions for a more viable future—one in which liberty, equality, and the well-being of all would have real, concrete expressions—is more than likely to be dismissed by those in power (or their ideologies) as utopian, unpractical, or misguided.*

Certainly, that sentiment remains relevant. Advocates for a kinder, more just world may be disregarded by those who believe that the world can

be no better than it already is, that no more effective system than the one in place exists. Isn't it ironic when the cynics are the naive ones?

—Caitlin Xavier

Pretty Things
By Virginie Despentes, translated by Emma Ramadan
Feminist Press at the City University of New York
214 pgs | $17.95

This novel starts with Claudine. She's living in Paris, hanging out with her friend Nicolas. The author says "like everyone else, [Claudine] was calculated, egotistical, shit-talking, petty, jealous, a fraud, a liar. But unlike everyone else, she owned it—without cynicism, with a disarming nature that made her irreproachable." From the get-go, this book is about performativity, echoing the Wife of Bath in The Canterbury Tales, among others—though the Wife of Bath was never shopping a demo for a record deal, as Claudine does. The catch here is that Claudine doesn't sing—it's her identical twin, Pauline, whose voice appears on tape. Pauline doesn't embrace her performative femininity to the extent that her twin Claudine does, preferring to shy away from the spotlight, dressing down and waiting for her boyfriend Sebastien to get paroled.

But for the demo to work, it has to go over onstage. So the three hatch a plan: Pauline will dress up as Claudine to play a label showcase. And she does. As the gig is going on, as industry types quaff drinks and shove business cards into manager Nicolas's hand, Claudine jumps from her window to her death.

From there, things get messy. This is the crux of Virginie Despentes' excellent novel: Pauline, the introvert, maintains the charade that she's her extroverted sister, adapting performative femininity to play the part of her departed sibling to her advantage—and her detriment. It's not hungry gazes and phone calls that propel this narrative, though there are no shortage of both: it's the ways in which, gender expectations meld and shift. The way going out for a once-quick errand—to say nothing of going onstage—takes more preparation time than she ever anticipated when the male gaze becomes ever-present and unrelenting. And the way the attention cuts. Pauline realizes "all the burning attentions she aroused so frequently surrounded her in solitude even more definitively than indifference."

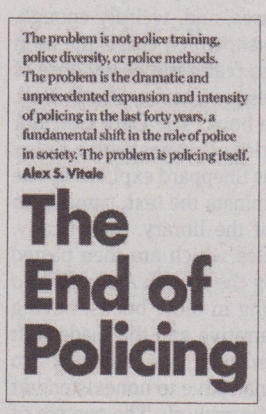
This solitude of indifference is manifested in positively chilling fashion when Pauline's boyfriend Sebastien is released from prison and comes to visit not her, but her deceased sister—and he doesn't recognize her, living in her sister's Paris apartment, for who she is. Sebastien flings Claudine around like a sexual rag doll, "an amusement park for men," whereas his intimacy with Pauline, in the past, had been more gentle.

It's occasionally difficult to keep track of Pauline and her twin Claudine, despite the latter's violent exit from the novel some forty pages in. This difficulty is the point, or part of it, as Pauline excavates layers of the past, remembering her upbringing and the way her father raised the two twins to be at odds with each other, not only doubles of themselves but of him. Intentional and effective, too, is the way that Despentes blurs the between the men in the book—after a time, keeping track of who the author refers to, Sebastien or Nicolas, when she says "him" can be a challenge because they begin to act similarly. This blurring becomes more pronounced when "the big boss" at a record label promises—and, eventually, delivers—industry fame and fortune for ongoing time on the casting couch.

Throughout, the prose shines—Emma Ramadan does a terrific job translating the original French into poetic, descriptive lines. I found myself stopping over and again to admire sentences that got a lot of work done with economy, like when Despentes says "A Sunday, winter sun, she went to the corner to buy some smokes." Just gorgeous.

I happened to be reading Pretty Things during the Kavanaugh hearings, when the worst parts of toxic masculinity were on display, not only in the courtroom but in the resulting press and social media. This novel is a fascinating dive into gender and performativity, haunting me with this fantastic passage, which applies so often: *"We have lies we maintain that we think are so terrible, and once we reveal them it doesn't come as a surprise to anyone. While other things that we thought were insignificant trigger huge catastrophe."*

—Michael T. Fournier



The End of Policing
Alex S. Vitale
Verso Books, 2017
302 pages | $26.95

Cops were never meant to be our friends. That is to assume that very few gated community dwellers are reading *MRR* (although I'll also allow that a certain percentage of the readers come from middle class or above backgrounds, so....) Anyway, the point is that from their inception, the mission of police forces has been to protect those at the top from those at the bottom. In 1829, Robert Peel constructed the first police force in England where he developed his ideas during the English occupation of Ireland. "This noble endeavour had its core, not in fighting crime but managing disorder and protecting the propertied class from the rabble," Alex S. Vitale writes, "In the face of growing insurrection, riots, and political uprisings."

And so it began: the Boston police force, the first in America, followed the same theories, and so on and so on. We find ourselves now with a complex bureaucratic framework that has snowballed on itself, a leisure class that appears to be robust, a working class that sees jobs and industry falling away and an idea of the future that seems more and more bleak. As Vitale points out in the introduction of *The End of Policing*, we have a police structure that requests of these men and women that they not only protect (white) society from crime, but from violent children, the scary homeless people, abusers of controlled substances, and to save their streets from savage brown and Black people who will at best steal from them and at worst blow everything up.

These are not realistic scenarios to begin with and are not problems that can be managed by jailing or fining citizens. *The End of Policing* is a clever title, and one that garners a second look, but this book is not a call for the end of the police forces here or abroad but for a change in the composition of police work as we know it.

One by one, Vitale breaks down the current and historical implications of the major issues that we and the cops face and attempts to gain some objectivity, and therefore, hopefully, some clarity on how to deal with them and the ways in which laws are enforced. The table of contents is a veritable who's who of situations the underbelly of society might face: "The School to Prison Pipeline," "Criminalizing Homelessness," "Policing Sex Work," "The War on Drugs," "Gang Suppression," and "Border Policing."

The answers to the questions raised in this book are not as clear as the situation it lays out. However, any deep observation of these problems

brings us closer to some dialogue that may change the trajectory of where our relationship with cops will be in the future. One that has seemed off center from its birth in a country that has been severely lacking foresight, and oversight, at least since World War II.

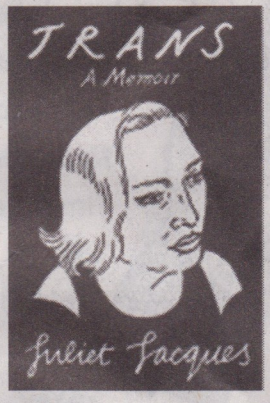
In the conclusion of *The End of Policing*, Vitale says:

> *Even if we could somehow implement these changes they would be ignored, resisted, and overturned because the institutional imperatives of politically motivated wars on drugs, disorder, crime, etc., would win out. Powerful political forces benefit from abusive, aggressive, and invasive policing and they are not going to be won over by technical arguments or heartfelt appeals to do the right thing...this does not mean that no one should articulate or fight for reforms. However those reforms must be part of a larger vision that questions the basic role of police in society.*

I understand that for the foreseeable future that we will have some form of security officers to maintain the borders and put away the "bad guys," but as Vitale points out, "Police often think of themselves as soldiers in a battle with the public rather than guardians of public safety."

For fans of thought, read it and persevere.

—SM



TRANS: A Memoir
Juliet Jacques
Verso Books, 2015
320 pgs|$13.96

It feels strange to read a book and perceive a specific detail completely wrong in my head the entire time, especially in the cases when I don't find out for months or years because book club meetings haven't happened since 2007. I can read a novel and not realize until halfway through that the Aspidistra is a plant and not a person; Hermione is not a two syllable name, but rather four syllables. The narrator was an inanimate object the whole time?! I almost feel like I need to immediately read the book again with the correct images in my brain to see if I might experience it differently. Errors in impression happen constantly, and oftentimes are never completely realized or repaired. In this case, Juliet Jacques takes her time vividly spelling out her sympathetic story, her general ambivalence about writing this memoir, and her unpopular opinions about mass media. She does not, however, make the safe assumption that the average American reader would see the word "football" and think, "Oh yeah football, that rough game with the giant helmets and super macho attitudes," rather than the British version of "football," which is what I would usually call "soccer." And yes, sure I should have realized somewhere in these 311 pages that she lives in the UK and her esteemed football games seemed much too queer-friendly (and just too friendly in general), to be American football, but I didn't—and even this seemingly tiny misinterpretation by my own foolhardy American-bliss-cocoon-brain,drastically changed my perceptions of the events in this document of Juliet's personal history. Sometimes things need to be spelled out for the average, generally privileged reader. And somehow average readers seem to be the audience for the average trans memoir.

TRANS: A Memoir is written by Juliet Jacques, a trans woman who doesn't really want to be writing a memoir about her great journey to self discovery, but also a woman who is drawn to writing at great length about perception and how it feels to be constantly misconceived. This book, although somewhat begrudgingly adapted from a series originally published in British newspaper, *The Guardian*, does its best to soften some of the lines that exist to help guide what people are allowed to talk about when people they know are transitioning and it attempts to make gender assumption and misconception a worry of the past. Jacques's memoir does what it was slated to do: tell her story to clear the path so she can finally write about weird art.

There are millions of memoirs that are just stale stories, probably ghostwritten and featuring famous people who already take up too much space in the media. Some people say that even the trans memoir feels like a tired story that is written mostly to appease editors and sell copies to cis people who are looking to be more well-rounded. Memoirs can be great documents of amazing feats and sure, some of them serve a great purpose, but most memoirs these days are self-indulgent catalogues of entitlement because everyone has a past and it's easy to write about what we know when money buys editors. Juliet Jacques took this book form and turned it into something a little bit different: an autobiographical personal history yes, but it is seamlessly blended alongside totally ace cultural commentaries. Juliet's is not a dark tale, but instead is mostly shared in a positive light even through the sad moments. She writes about unfortunate transgressions that are a direct result of her ambiguous gender and sexuality, but she counterbalances it with her more ordinary and widely relatable daily generalized anxiety and depression. The outcome, whether intended or not, is a fairly comprehensive critique on the history of trans representation in the media. By citing all these other creative works, Juliet expresses her unique point of view within a variety show of vaguely similar documents, a genius move that immediately integrates her memoir into the larger discourse of queer theory.

Although Jacques's words are easily absorbed, the topics are meant to be difficult. Juliet writes in depth about her transition process, including bloody details about pain and infection and mucus membranes and ongoing psychotherapy, but she does it with an air of inevitability. She is tokenized, cat-called, and insulted by strangers, while remaining supported and adored by her friends. Her family dynamics are easy to identify with and her descriptions of familial communication are a reminder that all transitions are difficult, but usually with time, things get easier. Her writing is authentic, and although she doesn't have any life altering lightbulb moments, the steady uphill to becoming *Juliet* is remarkable. As remarkable as it is, it's also an unremarkable storyline shared by so many other people. She is a sympathetic protagonist with an unglamorous story that feels human.

This book is clearly not meant to be an easy read. Even the title *TRANS*, so grandly exhibited in large, clear letters on the cover, suggests a slight contemptuous defiance of society as a whole. There is no possible misinterpretation of the subject matter; it is a memoir of a trans woman. Jacques struggles to pass, struggles to find community, to find jobs, to find a dress that fits a body it probably wasn't meant to fit, moves to different cities just to see how much less street harassment there will be. There is comfort in post-punk music, in soccer (not football), in writing. Jacques's memoir is captivating; she portrays herself as imperfect, with certain soft edges and unrelenting self awareness. It's easy to call a memoir brave, but this one really sweats it out—for both the writer and the reader.

—Rebecca Redman

BOOKS

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	YES	NO
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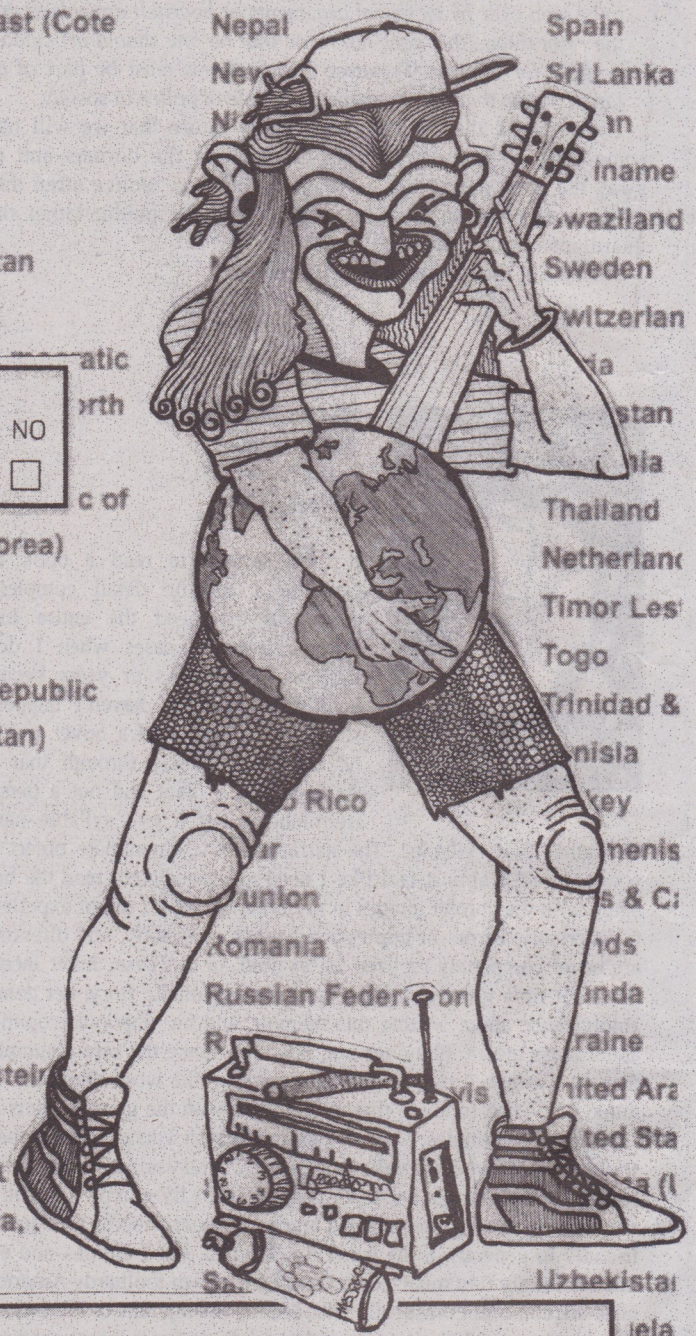

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RECORDS

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(RS) Ramy Silyan
(WN) Robert Collins

ALIEN NOSEJOB – "Various Fads and Technological Achievements" LP

Add another arm to that AUSMUTEANTS family tree for this extraterrestrial rhinoplasty exercise. While I typically find myself falling for this guy's tricks, I just can't stomach what's going on here. The A-side is pop-focused, seemingly indebted to some of the heavies one might associate with Flying Nun Records (perhaps an assumed fad?), though uninspired and basic in each instance. Things don't pick up on the B-side either, which is largely reliant on electronics (could these be tech achievements?). It's all just exercise in quirkiness, soft at every turn, free of any memorable moments. Steer clear. (MC)
(Anti Fade)

ALLVARET – "Skam Och Skuld" LP

This is the second LP from Sweden's ALLVARET, the previous one being released in 2012(!). Their sound is heavily informed by early US punk in the vein of melodic bands from Southern California as well as the usual Scandinavian suspects like MASSHYSTERI, GORILLA ANGREB, and the VICIOUS, with the vocals reminding me a lot of BURNING KITCHEN at times. While all of these roads are well-traveled, ALLVARET writes memorable and intensely catchy songs, producing an album's worth of material that is built to stand on its own. I hope it's not so long until their next album, but if it's this good, it'll be worth the wait. (GH)
(Dirt Cult)

ANGSTBREAKER – "The Flying Cat" CD

Fast and technical post-hardcore with really good slow(er) screaming *(but not quite screamo)* parts and an enviable attack. Massive production suits the groovier bit well, but it's when they unleash that Germany's ANGSTBREAKER are most noteworthy. I'm reminded occasionally of my pals in the NOW DENIAL even though this release is more nuanced and therefore less brutal...It's something about the attack, especially during tracks like "When The Machines Take Over." Slapping their 2016 EP on the back end (or the B-side of the vinyl version) is a solid move as well. Nice work. (WN)
(PCS)

ANTICITIZEN – "Stand Up and Fight" EP

Anarchist punk from New Jersey with songs about fighting the system, hating the things that keep us down, voting with a brick, and Christians continuing to be stupid. Songs of hate with no answers. Typical riffs, which isn't really a strike against them, but it feels like they're just painting by numbers, staying in the lines with the appropriate amount of anger for the appropriate subjects. (GH)
(Wise Ass)

ART THIEVES – "Russian Rats" LP

This is good and angry political punk out of Boston. Like a highly politically literate offspring of the BOUNCING SOULS' sound and the DROPKICK MURPHYS' energy, this group employs a straightforward, spit-in-your-face approach to punk to broadcast this twelve-chapter manifesto to whoever will listen. "Proxies" and "The Untouchables," the second and third tracks, are great samples of what sounds you'll hear when you dive in. When properly seasoned with well thought out, deeper verses, I'll never get tired of a chorus that includes a shouted *"middle fingers up!"* (RH)
(State Line)

THE BALBOAS – "Meet You in Hell" CD

A surf garage punk band that's been around since 1997 but have not had a release since 2012. We have some scene vets here including Dusty Watson on drums of AGENT ORANGE and SONICS fame. A pretty fun rockin' four-song release that's ready to be included in a Tarantino flick. (RL)
(self-released)

BB AND THE BLIPS – "Shame Job" LP

First off, the artwork with this record is really cool. It's all printed in light pink and green, with the cover proclaiming, "HOPE IS A PRISM / NO MORE PRISONS," line drawings of the band members on the back, and a crossword puzzle in the insert. There's something a little like *Penis Envy* CRASS about the vocals, which the singer sometimes belts out full force, and sometimes chants or growls rhythmically over strange and dissonant instrumental tones. Some of the tracks sound like straight up angry, political '80s punk, or like, if the DEAD KENNEDYS were good. At other times the sound is a little more freeform. Definitely for sure something to check out for fans of political art punk. (HB)
(Thrilling Living)

THE BLANKZ – "I'm a Gun / Bad Boy"

The A-side is a great example of how punk and new wave can sometimes meet to create something great. Mid-tempo, extremely catchy,

and featuring both guitar and an organ/synthesizer, it's a very pleasant song to listen to musically. I'm guessing it's not accidental that that pleasant sound is the soundtrack for *"I'm a gun and I'm gunna kill you."* The B-side definitely holds its own, but this is all about the A-side. (KK)
(Slope)

BODY PRESSURE – "US Decay" LP

Another ripper from what has proven to be a golden era of Texas hardcore. Texas has had a long standing scene with amazing bands, but as of late bands like VAASKA, IMPALERS, AMYGDALA, and MARKED FOR LIFE have been releasing noteworthy hardcore records that have proven spots in our collections. BODY PRESSURE only adds another page in the chapter that is Texas hardcore. We are given ten tracks of relentless politically charged punk that goes hard from the jump. Guitar oriented style of hardcore that feels akin to EXIT ORDER, but a lot more on the IMPALERS end of intensity. BODY PRESSURE really utilize that 1-2-1-2 hardcore format, but with a delivery that is far less soaked in effects. The vocals stand just above the driving drums and guitar, with just the right amount of clarity. This record is raw energy that jumps out at you. If you enjoy bands such as BLAZING EYE, HARAM, or IMPALERS, I would highly suggest picking up this debut LP from Austin's BODY PRESSURE. I am ready for a west coast tour y'all. (RS)
(Last Hour)

BONEFIRE – "Murderapolis" CD

Stripped down high speed hardcore punk. They've got that one guitar that's EQed like the guy just got kicked out of his metal band, and of course that's the guitar that's driving the mix (because of course it is), and it makes everything feel nice and urgent. Awkward sometimes, but urgent. File alongside SUBMACHINE and the like. You know: high speed hardcore punk bands. (WN)
(FTWNU2)

BOO HAG – "Marie Laveau / Hokus Pokus"

Spooky guitar and drum duo doing the whole country blues-inspired horror punk thing. There's a little magic on this slab. Flipping the switch to straight up psychobilly a few times definitely helps. Dark and sparse with killer operatic yodeling vocals. Yes, there's a shtick, but it's not an overwhelming amount. This might not make any top tens over here, but any fans of the bare bones stuff, or the creepy crawly stuff please take note. No lyric sheet or even a cover or anything. Just straight-from-busted-jukebox-to-thrift store style. (DZ)
(Sit N Spin)

BORZOI – "A Prayer for War" LP

Some real jittery fucks here from Texas. They look like twenty-something BAD SEEDS rejects, and the music is abrasive at first. It is odd, though, only the first songs are really like that; the rest gets real new wave OINGO BOINGO and really stretches out into weird '80s zones. Cool effort, definitely worth tracking down if this sounds like your bag. (GB)
(12XU)

BUD BRONSON & THE GOOD TIMERS – "Between the Outfield and Outer Space" LP

This album, a take on the singer's aging process and a tribute to his father, is what you would get if Craig Finn from the HOLD STEADY sang for the WONDER YEARS. It's truly hopeful pop punk that tries very hard to sound more cynical than it is. That appears to be the intent rather than a misstep, however. The whole album comes off as artful and personal. I got particularly stuck on the lyrics, *"Sucking on the end of a dying cigarette / I guess the glory days are back once more,"* from "We Are the Champions (of the Basement)." They feel trite out of context, but within the album as a whole, they really grabbed my attention. There are many more moments like that throughout the album. Like the high school stoner trying to discuss Sartre when a reference to Cheers would do the trick, this group has created a record that is both heartfelt and silly while never being unentertaining. (RH)
(Snappy Little Numbers)

CANCER CLAN / GOD'S AMERICA – split EP

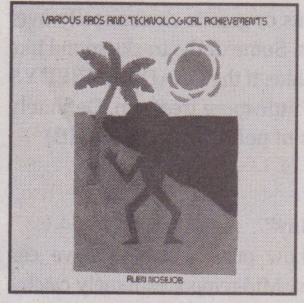
I gotta hand it to Las Vegas's GOD'S AMERICA: any band that opens their side of a split with a cover of a JUDAS PRIEST song is *bold*. Unfortunately for GOD'S AMERICA, while musically their cover is fine, the vocalist simply does not have a voice comparable to Rob Halford's, both in terms of power and ability. Their second song on the split is completely different: it's a grindcore song that switches between blasts and a faster paced sludge riff. It's an all-too-brief conclusion to an already short side, and does little to make up the toothless "Breaking the Law" cover. Fortunately, Germany's CANCER CLAN fares better. The two songs they offer up are well performed and varied versions of your typical Euro crust, complete with a cool sludgy intro and death metal tremolo blurs. They don't reinvent the wheel, but they certainly will please crust aficionados. (JD)
(Merciless)

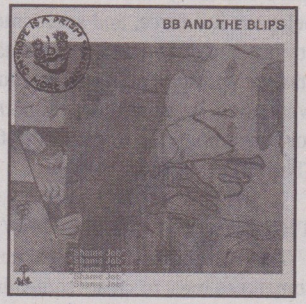
CAR CITY – "Connecting the Dots" LP

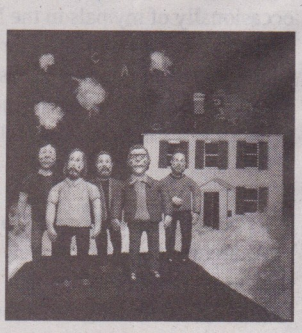
This is the kind of thing that I can really get behind, but I wouldn't necessarily (or ever) call it punk. This is jangly pop music. It's mid-tempo and catchy as hell and, as the jangly might have suggested, has a folk like quality. It relies heavily on the vocals and the melodies. And, as you might expect, the lyrics are often sometimes self-reflective. Is it possibly a little cheesy? It is, but it's also a fine record. Cool yellow / green splattered vinyl. (KK)
(Plant Music)

CASTRO – "Infidelity" CD

Norway's CASTRO boast members of ANGOR WAT and LIFE BUT HOW TO LIVE IT among their ranks. The vocals of the latter are front and center, clearly the focal point of this band, and rightly so as Katja's voice draws you in and holds you close. The discordant hardcore of ANGOR WAT has matured, however, and *Infidelity* is simultaneously interesting, addictive and innovative...but CASTRO are still just off the main road traveling their own path. Managed anger in tracks like "Undercover," the solid groove of "Long Story Short"







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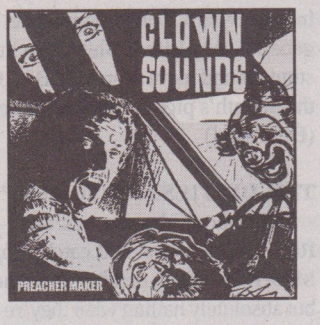
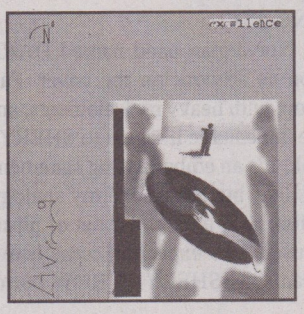




and catchy burners like "Personal Question" all strung together like a record should be. I like things that force me out of my comfort zone… and sometimes I like staying there for a while. (WN)
(Boss Tuneage)

CITY MOUSE / MURDERBURGERS – split EP

Both bands here bring two tracks of pop punk that make me feel particularly nostalgic for Tallahassee's the SUNDAY NETWORK. CITY MOUSE has a strong aura of tragedy in both of their contributions, dealing with police shootings and the death of a friend. MURDERBURGERS are faster, more straightforward odes to the ennui of trying to survive. Their first contribution also features backing vocals from Stacey Dee of BAD COP / BAD COP, one of the best bands of the last few years. This split is an excellent intro to either band, and everyone needs more vinyl with human-faced dogs on both the front and back cover. (RH)
(Brassneck / It's Alive)

CIVILISED SOCIETY? – "War in My Head" CD

While I'm not sure if the world needs a new CIVILISED SOCIETY? recording in 2018, I am definitely sure that the world needs *this* recording, regardless of the band's legacy. Think LP-era NAUSEA styled metallic punk with sharp space age female vocals...and Bev sounds every bit as good as she did 30 years ago. The production is a touch on the metal end, but CIVILISED SOCIETY? were always sonic fence walkers, and the recording helps tracks like "Alone On A Hill" come to life. I confess that hearing this four song EP makes me a little excited...Old punks breathing life into punk. (WN)
(Boss Tuneage)

CLOWN SOUNDS – "Preacher Maker" LP

I can't keep up with all of Todd Congelliere's bands these days, as it seems like they all share members, and any given song could fit on any other given album. The good news is that lately they've all been fucking stellar. This incarnation is sparse, dimwitted (I mean that as a compliment), catchy as fucking hell, produced with the fucking drums beating you in the face, but still not overpowering you, somehow, and of course, Todd's signature semi-nonsensical caterwaul. I've seen many a band attempt to replicate Todd's style, and they have all failed miserably. Todd's grasp on crafting a killer hook on just three (or sometimes only two) chords, throwing a robo-primitive rhythm section in there and topping it off with weird, better left unwritten lyrics sang like a human baby / injured feline hybrid is at a Yale graduate / black belt level here, so proceed with caution. To me, the first CLOWN SOUNDS record felt more like a solo album, or a bedroom demo recording project that turned out way better than Todd expected, and I never knew which band of his was gonna snag which song. These full-band ragers on here, though, are all finished, well polished, and stand out on their own as a formidable force. This is fucking great. (DZ)
(Recess)

CONSTANT MONGREL – "Living in Excellence" LP

I loved the previous CONSTANT MONGREL records, and this is a transcendent return to what I want out of music (return only because I think there's been a gap of a few years between records, all CONSTANT MONGREL records are top quality and should be purchased immediately). Lyrics tear down the cynical bleat of our current political age of extreme delirium and hatred while the sound behind somehow reminds me that swaggering VENOM P STINGER style but maybe also KIRK BRANDON AND THE PACK, just relentless fucking power! The songs are so catchy and sick, desolate and total. This record will easily make my year end top ten and probably yours too, so consume, freak! (LG)
(Anti Fade)

CONTROL FREAKS – "I Am Crime / Time's Up"

Mr. Greg Lowery—Budget Rock's true villain—is back with a whole new gang of Freaks this go-around. "I Am Crime" falls in line much what he's done in recent years (stretching all the way back to late ZODIAC KILLERS): bouncy mid-tempo punk, soaked in attitude and shtick-heavy (see the sleeve that imagines the band as bank robbers), though fairly inoffensive. "Time's Up" actually fares a lot better, skating between power pop and punk really well...Probably my favorite moment from this band to date. (MC)
(Bachelor)

CULT MIND / MOKOSOS – split LP

You know when you're like "I love this song! Who is this? I know this..." That's what happened when Layla threw this on, and I almost immediately realized I share a practice space wall with MOKOSOS! Mystery solved! The opening track is unforgettable, like early MINOR THREAT sung in Spanish, hence it's been floating around my head just from hearing it through a wall. The trend of catchy songs continues, heavily influenced by the commanding and tuneful vocal holler and clues that the drummer plays metal. High energy and vocal hooks is everything, and MOKOSOS has them. San Jose's CULT MIND keep the quality high with ferocious no-coast classic USHC like WHITE CROSS meets DIE KREUZEN. Basically, if this had cooler art and was on a hip label it would be all the rage, but thankfully you've chosen to read this rather than let all the algorithms do the work for you! Hot shit! (MA)
(Suburbanized)

DAD BRAINS – "Baby Jail" EP

Joke hardcore where the hook is that all the songs are about being a dad. Best comparison is not BAD BRAINS, but those really early hardcore BEASTIE BOYS tunes. Even the vocals are kind of like that. It's not hard to imagine the singer throwing his arms around like he's being tough, but totally sucking at it and looking ridiculous. I mean, I don't know that he does that, but that's the image this record conjures. The whole thing is pretty ridiculous. I can't say it's good, but it's certainly amusing, and essentially harmless in a non-subversive kind of way. Or, to put it in terms DAD BRAINS could understand, it's less *Goodnight Moon* and more *Thomas the Tank Engine*. Next up: DAD BRAINS should remake the NUBS' "Job" from the parents' perspective. (MR)
(Pirates Press)

DARK TIMES – "Tell Me What I Need" LP

Not what I was expecting from a Norwegian band named DARK TIMES with an impending execution as artwork on the cover. Fast driven, melodic punk without being pop, with heavy rock elements, and dare I say it, with vocals that have the undeniable likeness to SHERYL CROW, if SHERYL CROW sang punk. It's an embarrassing statement, not because of what it actually sounds like, but because of my analogy. Their songs are meticulous in execution, with nary a hair out of place, and it's got me a bit off center because I was expecting some heavy Nordic sludge. That, and the fact I can't get SHERYL CROW out of my head. (CR)
(Sheep Chase)

DEE RANGERS – "All You Need Tonight" LP

The Swedes have a knack for putting out records that seem to be able to communicate that they have a sense of their history in rock music. They have a sense of place. This is punk and pop and, probably mostly, rock'n'roll. It's so fucking catchy it's almost unbelievable. And I can't remember the last time I heard a punk record or a punk band where the singer could hold a note like Per can. Motherfucker, is that a harmonica? And horns? I may or may not have heard of this band, but to learn that this is their seventh album blew my mind. The '60s and '70s influences are obvious, and incorporated nicely. (KK)
(Low Impact)

DESAHUCIADOS – LP

Puerto Rico's DESAHUCIADOS plays deathrock with enough raw punk energy to keep me interested throughout the LP. Their guitar riffs have that hit-you-over-the-head, bulldozer attack style of RUDIMENTARY PENI, while the vocals are thrown into the never-ending reverb chamber of contemporary punk. Side B slows down a little bit and delves more into a post-punk side of the band, showing a little more depth and dynamics, which suits them well. All lyrics are sung in Spanish. Overall, this is a truly solid LP, showcasing maturity and intensity that is not easy to pull off. (GH)
(mondo Mongo / Slovenly)

DIE GROUP – "Disease Control" LP

Killer full length from L.A.'s DIE GROUP. They are a demented three-piece doing very basic angry music. The vocals are shouted monotone like SCREAMERS or WEIRDOS, but musically it also feels like DESTRUCTION UNIT at times. Usually this kind of stuff gets old fast, but this LP is pretty much in the zone the whole way through. Listen and you can feel like a total degenerate. (GB)
(Sex Tape)

DIMESACK – "Says God Says Fuck You" LP

I was less than enthused to listen to a band called DIMESACK, but it turns out that they kinda nail it. Do I have to eat a gyro filled with my own shit now? Hope not. Anyway, very primitive two-dude filth, sometimes synthy, always savage punk. It's admirable how they rework classic '60s punk sounds as bleak and evil, really reminiscent of LOST SOUNDS in that regard. I also appreciate their entirely fucked stance on life in general: "My Life Is Shit," "So Fucked Up," "Scum Fuck," etc. An even stupider and more desperate BLACK PANTIES? Maybe. Regardless, it's this month's pick for the confirmed assholes in our readership. (MC)
(Blak Skul)

THE DIRTIEST – "100 Shots" EP

Four short, sharp songs sung in this Florence duo's native tongue. Relentlessly upbeat and catchy pop punk, in the vein of the RAMONES, MARKED MEN, or labelmates the SPITS. Not breaking any new ground, but absolutely nailing what they're trying to do. Grappa Grappa Hey! (AM)
(Mondo Mongo / Slovenly)

DISFEAR – "A Brutal Sight of War" LP

What can be said about this cataclysmic D-beat masterpiece? Since 1993 this has been offered as a two 7"s, then a 10" and now this 12" LP—a dense, snarling, power soloed throughout perfect example of the genre. Super steady Scandinavian hardcore ever so slightly accelerating through the play, pushing toward a cardiac seizure. This LP is clearer than DISCARD, heavier than DISCHANGE, and more passionate than AVSKUM. Side A is entirely in English, a powerhouse of traditional D-beat känkpunk. The playlist on side B is in Swedish and that much more sinister—each side a different recording session (the said first two 7"). I actually prefer side B, as it has a lot more brooding bounce, darker death metal attitude, and drum fills that break rank. You know what to expect here. If you don't have this, certainly pick it up. (JR)
(Disfear / Havoc / LaFamilia)

DIVIDED / HEAVEN – "Cold War" CD

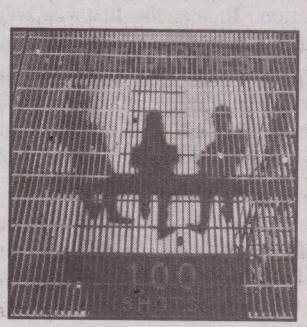
I can't decide if this sounds like MATCHBOX 20 / THIRD EYE BLIND or pop emo à la JIMMY EAT WORLD / GET UP KIDS. This is fronted by a guy who started out in street punk and hardcore bands but more recently moved into this singer-songwriter direction. I'm always weary of this move because once you cross over there's some pretty fierce singer songwriter competition. This is decent and pleasant. The guy has a pure vocal style with a fair amount of acoustic guitar in the mix, so don't expect BILLY BRAGG or FRANK TURNER punk folk. Decent for those quiet mornings. (RL)
(Wiretap)

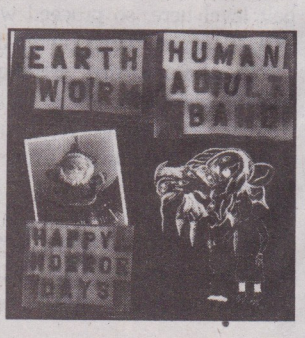
EARTHWORM / HUMAN ADULT BAND – split EP

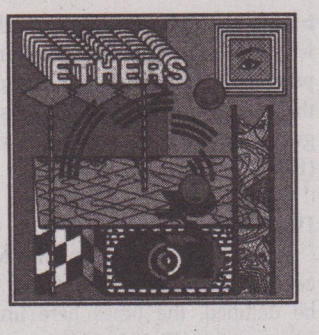
Bombastic weirdo hardocre from EARTH WORM, two tracks of furious freak punk on speed, and "Beastly People" is a top level track with the entire price of admission. One mutant dirge from HUMAN ADULT BAND on the flip, bringing to mind early '80s art-drenched noise punk. Excellent split. Good to keep it interesting, and good to keep me listening. (WN)
(D.I.H.D.)

ELECTRIC CHAIR – "Public Apology" EP

This record is definitely a stand-out this month—a modern-day JFA or JERRY'S KIDS. The riffs are eclectic, and all of the songs are







short and fast. The vocals are eclectic as well, with plenty of attitude—CIRCLE JERKS come to mind. There's also these cool lead parts sprinkled throughout. The wave of amazing hardcore bands coming out of Olympia is no secret, and this fits well with releases from BETA BOYS and STIFF LOVE. (AJ)
(Stucco)

ETHERS – LP

ETHERS are from Chicago, and are made up of veterans of the garage scene there. I wasn't familiar with any of their previous bands, but it's clear that they all know what they're doing. This album contains twelve dynamic, carefully constructed songs, given a melodic edge by prominent organ lines and supported by deft, spare playing from the guitarist and rhythm section. Everything is in its place and there's nothing extraneous, letting the songs speak for themselves. The singer reminds me so much of GENTLEMAN JESSE, but the music strays from the strict power pop formula. (AM)
(Trouble In Mind)

EVENING STANDARDS – CD

Bloomington, Indiana goddamn stalwarts Chris and Daun from at least half a dozen "why the hell did they break up?" bands like DOOR KEYS, LANDLORD, PURPLE 7, and FAT SHADOW, and drummer / sweetheart Cole from FUTURE VIRGINS and ADD/C (and a few hundred more bands) spew out a sweet fuckin' rager that will unfortunately pass most of our readers by. The vocalists are probably sick and tired of more X mentions, especially after all these years of honing their chops and twisty, snakey dual vocals, but it's undeniable that their vocal delivery hits you hard in a way much like John and Exene did, and I apologize for this tired as fuck comparison. Is it punk? Shit, I don't know. I'll be 48 soon, don't trust me. I do think this is fucking killer, though. If you like catchy shit that is sneaky about being smart, this will be your go to release for a while. (DZ)
(Let's Pretend)

FIST FIGHT ON ECSTASY – "This Better Be Good Shit!" EP

Given the amount of booze and (male) nudity that appears in their band photo collage, you can forgive me for expecting this to have some scumfuk tendencies, but it is really straightforward hardcore punk in the mid-to-late-'80s USHC mold with one slightly mismatched pogo punk ditty that ended up being the standout track. This is completely inessential, but it's definitely fun to listen to and hopefully will find an audience in their the local scene (wherever the fuck that is, this record has like no information included) and those who will purchase anything with a skeleton on the cover. (AU)
(E-Tard)

FLAG OF DEMOCRACY – "No School No Core" LP

You can talk about "old school" until you're blue in the face, but fucking DEAD MILKMEN name dropped FOD on *Big Lizard*, and that shit came out 33 years ago. *No School No Core* shows Philadelphia legends FLAG OF DEMOCRACY faster and more irreverent than ever, and I swear that each time I hear a new release (there are a lot of them), I think they kick everything up a notch. The speed, the hooks, the melodies, the fire...modern hardcore could learn a lot by watching what these old ass dudes are pulling off in a hype-void. Listen to "Let's Build a Wall" and show me a band of hardcore upstarts that can touch this level of intensity... And then they drop a HÜSKER DÜ meets JAWBREAKER caliber love song. I suppose that it's easier to do whatever the fuck you want when you've got this many years under your belt, but the young punks would be well advised to take notes here—FOD kick everything from hardcore to region rock right in the damn ass. (WN)
(Boss Tuneage / SRA)

FRANKIE AND THE WITCH FINGERS – "Drip / Tea"

Acid rock of the cleanest order, but with really loud fuzztone lead guitar. Wah pedals and reverb, but nary a second of feedback. I'm trying to pick up on the sexual references in the lyrics but the guitars are just too fucking loud. I'm not going to tell you what I think he's saying, because I might be wrong, but he's rhyming something with "tongues." Possibly sexy. Possibly not. FRANKIE's been around, and I don't think this record is moving them in any particular direction. It's a good use of the single format, filling up space with a variety of (loud guitar) sounds. Side B is not as catchy. If you like 1968 (the year), bands that have albums with "flower" in the title, London, or *The Monkees* (TV show), you will find much to enjoy here. (MR)
(Let's Pretend)

FUTURE VIRGINS – "Doomsday Raga" LP

This is garage punk from Tennessee that sounds like basement shows and cheap beer smell. With moments of surf and power pop mixed into the fuzzy garage sound throughout the album, there is rarely a break to drink some water and breathe. One noticeable exception is "Old Man Charlemagne," where an acoustic guitar takes over for the band and the singer switches gears into a crusty moan not unlike a BLACKBIRD RAUM song. You've likely heard whispers about FUTURE VIRGINS already over the last half-decade or so, so you should probably get in on this if you haven't yet. If you need more illustration, though, picture a FIDLAR with fewer skateboards and more house parties. (RH)
(Let's Pretend / Recess)

THE GENTLE ART OF CHOKIN' / WEAK TIES – split EP

Get ready for 6" of powerviolence shredding out of Germany! The GENTLE ART OF CHOKIN' do the fastcore thing, but throw in plenty of pummeling breakdowns. I bet these guys rule the pit. WEAK TIES does straight up power fucking violence! Like SPAZZ and all those bands that SPAZZ liked. Sure, this is nothing new, but it's powerviolence, so who gives a fuck. (BA)
(Flies Ins Gesicht / Flowerviolence / Sengaja)

HALE BOPP ASTRONAUTS / SODA CITY RIOT – split EP

This is your typical Fat wreck Chords-type punk. Lots of whoas and gos, a ska part on the SODA CITY RIOT side, and what sounds like

a MISFITS song on the HALE BOPP ASTRONAUTS side. Lyrics seem to center around hating your job and—without really being too specific—hating the government. For fans of the FLATLINERS, IRON CHIC, and the hundreds of boring bands who sound just like the FLATLINERS and IRON CHIC. (AJ)
(River Monster)

HEAVY MANTLE – "Weights & Measures" 12"

The twelve songs that HEAVY MANTLE managed to fit on one side of a 12" have themselves managed to not sound like anything more specific than the late '90s. The first track floats somewhere between the emo bands of that era and the CURE, and is pretty but heavy at the same time. The next track falls into a No Idea style catchy pop punk tune with hints of the poppy emo (think CRANK!). They follow it up with a song that sounds very much like TWELVE HOUR TURN. The following songs all tend to fall somewhere in that net. While this doesn't make for the most cohesive record, there are some real good songs on here. (PA)
(Tor Johnson)

HORROR VACUI – "New Wave of Fear" LP

Dramatic deathrock from Bologna, Italy, with deep, theatrical vocals and a punch-in-the-face snare drum sound. The chorus-drenched guitar melodies drive the songs, and the overall sound is convincingly '80s. The vibe is more on the smooth and subtly creepy end of deathrock, rather than the demented, disturbing end. The melodies are hypnotic and danceable. The most interesting track is "Behind," when the guitar interweaves with the other instruments in a way that almost sounds like traditional accordion music. The lyric sheet artwork is carefully drawn in a style influenced by Edward Gorey, which all deathrockers are likely to appreciate. (HB)
(Sabotage)

HUMAN CULL – "Revenant" CD

Wild, angst ridden UK grindcore, heavy on the blasts and delivered with terrifying precision. Huge production, deadly presentation, and when they slow down to a death-tinged dirge, HUMAN CULL are formidable to say the least...and then they fuckin' go fast again. Simply put, this release is an absolute monster. (WN)
(Wooaaargh)

HYÄNE – "Demontage und Zerfall" LP

Eight tracks of tense, atmospheric punk with industrial heaviness. Borrowing liberally from the KILLING JOKE style book, in line with recent contemporaries like DIÄT. The thick production makes no attempt to be subtle—employing MOTÖRHEAD's "everything louder than everything else" strategy, HYÄNE deliver a bass-heavy, synth-driven kick to the head harder than most dark punk "got a chorus pedal for Solstice" pretenders. Good stuff. (AM)
(Static Age)

INFINITE VOID – "Endless Waves" LP

INFINITE VOID is actually quite the opposite; their sound is a flourishing of lush, highly melodic post-punk that's just as soft and billowy as it is precise and angular. Similar to FLESH WORLD, there is a vast space between ambient vocals and weaving, pinpoint-like post-punk guitar, and the rhythm that intersects the two. It's the light that shines through the darkness. But the opposite can also be said. I guess I'm just having a good day. (CR)
(Blackwire / Contraszt!)

IV – "Magnesium" EP

Inaugural outing from this Minnesota flock, associated in some capacity with COLOR TV and / or CITRIC DUMMIES. Dynamism be damned, the tunes here implore a militaristic, forward-motion focus— pure drive, but not in a 'til-the-doors-fall off way. Bleak views wound fuckin' tight, reminiscent of EX-CULT and the ilk, though sharpened on all sides. The 90-seconds-or-bust hard-line here really makes you wanna hear more, so I'm already curious 'bout what's next. Recommended. (MC)
(Total Punk)

THE JACK BENNIES – "Evil Gain" 12"

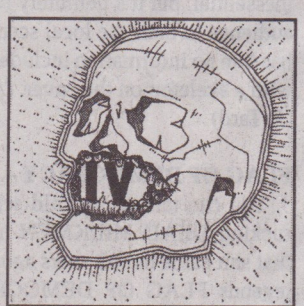
Hearing that there were members of of the CANDY SNATCHERS in this outfit, I was less than thrilled to review this. Five seconds after the needle hits the record, and I'm pretty fuckin' stoked. This may be rock bullshit, but it's sloppy and weird and wild and honest enough to prick up my ears and keep my attention. Musically, it's not expanding anyone's horizons, or busting down any barriers, but the vocalist's delivery of a sobered Duane Peters mixed with the phrasing of a superduper subdued Ron Reyes, and pretty weird lyrics make this a fucking gem. Anthemic, manic yet desperate, loose and dirty rock. I can't seem to stop listening to this one. A weird note that I can't seem to get out of my head: side B seems like straight up drugged out covers of the finer moments of CIRCLE JERKS, and you know, when they were good, they were fuckin' great, so there you go. (DZ)
(Dope$ickdollar)

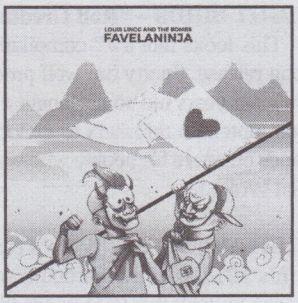
KING BROTHERS – "Wasteland" CD

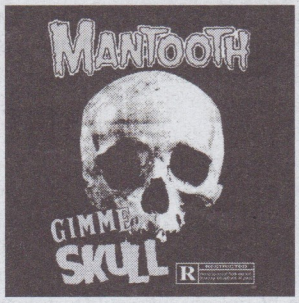
Corny-ass good times rock'n'roll from Japan that was honestly super difficult to get through, I mean, like, it's great to celebrate life and feeling good and loving rock'n'roll, but surely you could do it in a more interesting way, probably without quite so many "*oh yeah!!*"s, and almost certainly without the egregious use of harmonica, and wow, I just feel like no one needs to be listening to this in the year 2018, and especially not me, and, I mean, this band has been around for twenty years, just think about that, *twenty goddamn years*, like, think about what you could accomplish over the course of twenty years, and, well, I bet they're real nice guys. (MF)
(Hound Gawd!)

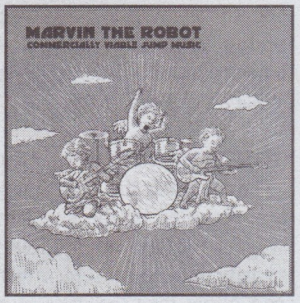
KORKKIVIKA – "Vituttaa Jo Nyt" EP

This is fucking great! Speedy, melodic Finnish punk à la ASTA KASK, LAMA or a slightly more "modern" KAKKA-HÄTÄ 77 with touches of LEATHERFACE-style guitar flourishes. The songwriting is top-notch, upbeat but with that minor key melancholy that makes the









great melodic punk bands truly great, and with the longest track clocking in at 2:35 not a single song drags or overstays its welcome. The vocals are tuneful but gruff, the aforementioned guitar heroics are excellent, and in proper RAMONES style, the rhythm section are always locked-in and driving from underneath. The best track is probably the SCREECHING WEASEL-touched "Maksalle Kyytia," but there's definitely not a stinker among the six tracks here Excellent stuff! (AU)
(Roku)

LITTERS / THREE MINUTE MOVIE – split EP

A tasty little split platter from a couple of Tokyo punky pop groups. THREE MINUTE MOVIE have been around for a minute...almost twenty years, I think. Their two tracks here are perfect tuneful punk blending elements of PROTEX, J CHURCH, SNUFF, the 'TONE, etc in a way that would not have been out of place on a Snuffy Smile EP back then. Layers and layers of guitar melody. LITTERS keep the momentum (and melody) going on the flip with a pair of tough little numbers with some sharp power pop riffs, but played with a snarl. The singer has such a great voice; she reminds me of someone but I can't put my finger on who. Maybe Julie from WAT TYLER / DAN? At any rate, brilliant stuff. (AM)
(Fine Tuning!)

LOUIS LINGG AND THE BOMBS – "Favela Ninja" LP

This is basically a pop record made by Parisian anarchist punks. Distinctly European. The mixing of styles and theatrical-anarcho vibes recall CHUMBAWAMBA, with frequent rave / jungle parts carrying the rhythm. It's pretty wacky but well-produced and I'm admittedly won over by some of the tunes. There's no lyric sheet but from what I can decipher (it's sung in English) it feels like a positive and proactive response to the world shit-system, rather than a cynical and depressed reaction. "What are we gonna do!?" rather than "we're fucked!" I've certainly never heard anything quite like it, but it's possible that I just wasn't looking. I'm not gonna be playing this a lot, but I'm gonna keep it around for the uplifting mood. (MA)
(self-released)

LES LULLIES – LP

Anthemic, dirty rock punk à la HEARTBREAKERS or even SLAUGHTER AND THE DOGS. Super fucking energetic. They sure mention REAL KIDS a lot in their press material. This is fuckin' killin' it right now. Properly harnesses that over the top '70s cliche shit (complete with Johnny B. Goode solos and a few goofy piano slides) without rehashing or sounding trite as hell, not unlike a band like EXPLODING HEARTS. (DZ)
(Slovenly)

MANTOOTH – "Gimme Skull! / Wally Wally, Blood And Molly"

Full throttle dad punk under the guise of shocking horror punk. Like out-of-date SoCal skate punk retooled unsuccessfully for the Hot Topic crowd. It's all very well done, but wholly uninteresting. (WN)
(Missing Beats)

MARVIN THE ROBOT – "Commercially Viable Jump Music" LP

This record is about ¾ really good and ¼ less than good. Let's start with the good stuff. Musically, it's catchy, well-written, lo-fi rock songs that are a little pop and a little punk. Vocally, it's sung and can be a little off key at times with a bit of a false (I'm assuming) British accent. The closest band comparison might be the WEDDING PRESENT. The ones that don't work are the heavier ones or the ones where the vocals don't have the J MASCIS "his voice doesn't sound great but works great with this song" thing going on. Much of that may also be due to the vocals being way up front and at times sounding disconnected from the rest of the song. On the whole, way worth it. (PA)
(Dreaming Ansible Audio)

MARVIN THE ROBOT / MORS ONTOLOGICA – split EP

This 7" is really whatever. MARVIN THE ROBOT and MORS ONTOLOGICA both contribute singles from respective albums. MARVIN THE ROBOT has a single from their record *Loveiathan* called "unremarkable" and the song is just that...unremarkable. It sounds like lazy ARCHERS OF LOAF or JEFF BUCKLEY. The singer's awful wails and moans over what sounds like decent melodies and song structures are really a bummer. This record only gets worse with MORS ONTOLOGICA's side. A single from their album *Hot Mess* called "Molly Merrill Payne" and it just sounds like straight up NEUTRAL MILK HOTEL and MOUNTAIN GOATS worship. (RS)
(Very Small Scene)

MICHAEL KANE AND THE MORNING AFTERS – "Laughing At The Shape I'm In" EP

MK & Co. definitely wear their hearts on their sleeves across the four tunes here. I don't hear anything here that I'd tag as punk though... It's all basic bar rock, alternating between REPLACEMENTS and BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN worship, which is a one-way-ticket to the shitter in my book. (MC)
(State Line)

MIDNITE SNAXXX – "Let Me Do What I Want / Faded Pictures"

The SNAXXX are masters of the 45 format! The A-side is a pitch perfect A-LINES style garage punk rager that will make you picture yourself driving to utopia as the patriarchy crumbles while listening to the ZEROS. "Faded Pictures" is a dreamy power pop sliver that brings to mind a sleepy cross between the SHIVVERS and maybe even COCK SPARRER!?! I recommend immediately grabbing every single MIDNITE SNAXXX 7" as they are all perfect examples of what is possible when you have some NERVES 45s and hung out at the Purple Onion and saw a few HEADCOATEES... (LG)
(Bachelor)

MODERN CONVENIENCE – "So So Modern" LP

Devout rock sermonizing from Tennessee. Modern Convenience is apparently the work of a singular being, one Mikey B., a guy who's seemingly studied some (of the most subdued) pages from JAY REATARD's solo-work playbook. The collection is fairly one-note,

though: catchy punk that's merely sprinkled with dark antagonism, lacking fangs. Everything's assembled in a sensible way, I just wish things sounded a little more reckless. (MC)
(What's For Breakfast)

MORON'S MORONS – "Indecent Exposure" EP

Garage punk the way it was fuckin' meant to sound. Fast, in your face, distorted by the pure power of not giving a fuck, plus they got swagger for days on this four banger. And even though the title track is easily the coolest song covered in this issue, the lyrics on the second song might take the cake by rhyming "*I got my own cult to follow*" with "*the devil sucks my cock and swallows.*" Smear this all over your tongue and taste the victory. (WN)
(Slovenly)

MOSFETT – LP

This looks to be the first release from this Vancouver band. Every song is like a dense wall of dark melodic '90s alt-grunge with heavy garage. They could just a easily be labeled as heavy grunge if the vocals weren't as high pitched and off-kilter, say similar to J MASCIS, that offer whiny musings to soften their sound. MOSFETT remind me of a less frenetic SHARK TOYS. Which is a good thing. (CR)
(Astro Supreme)

MOTHERS LOVE – "Popes Piss / Let's Be Nothing"

This 7" has two goth rock songs. The A-side is a trudging BAUHAUS inspired tune that employs the classic quiet verse / loud chorus to back the deep, monotone vocals and heavily effected guitar. The B-side is more upbeat and sounds like those modern "indie" rock bands that are trying to sound like TALKING HEADS. That being said, it is a pretty catchy song. (PA)
(Chosen Desire)

NEGATIVE SCANNER – "Nose Picker" LP

Chicago's NEGATIVE SCANNER is back with another album full of jittery-yet-confident tunes. I think there are few bands in America that can touch NEGATIVE SCANNER at the moment, and that's almost entirely due to the fact that this is a band who clearly know who they are; they're playing to their strengths, unswayed by any passing trend. Those strengths, in my estimation, are primarily the sense of nervous energy they're able to impart and Rebecca's vocals. Every guitar line, every hi-hat rhythm furthers the sense of urgency in each song; no matter the tempo, there's always a feeling that the whole thing could burst open at any moment. It's all held in place by the vocals, which can make a hairpin turn from low, dramatic belting to an impassioned bark at any moment. Very occasionally the band leans into those tendencies *too* hard—side B opener "The Only One," with its stops and starts, strikes me as a little self-indulgent. But for the most part, this is a band that has earned its understated confidence. NEGATIVE SCANNER isn't a band that demands you to listen to them; they're a band that is there with something to say when you're ready to start paying attention. And it's to your benefit to start *now*. (MF)
(Trouble in Mind)

NIGHT BIRDS – "Roll Credits" CD

This looks like a 7" compilation, but it's really just their new eight-song release. Snotty but well produced punk from this East Coast band. Now ten years old so no longer a newer band, these guys vary on songs from uptempo thrashers to melodic guitar type tunes. One of the better bands out there for people who want tunes in their punk but not pop. (RL)
(Fat Wreck)

NIGHT WITCH — "Who's Next" LP

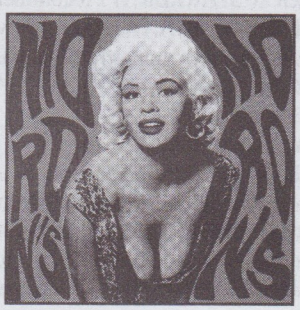
It's 2018, and the hardcore scene is taking a hard look at its own macho bullshit thanks to bands like this. On *Who's Next*, the Tallahassee band delivers twenty unrelenting songs of pure anger. Musically I would maybe compare NIGHT WITCH to bands like DROPDEAD and HAYMAKER, but what really sets them apart from others are the lyrics. The songs are very to-the-point on important issues like abusers making half-assed apologies, sexual assault, lack of access for people with mental illnesses, and reproductive rights, and the band is brave enough to include a zine with the record explaining the lyrics. Their willingness to be vulnerable is inspiring. (AJ)
(self-released)

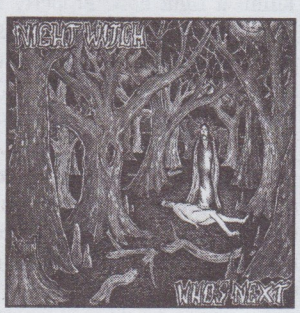
NO JAP – LP

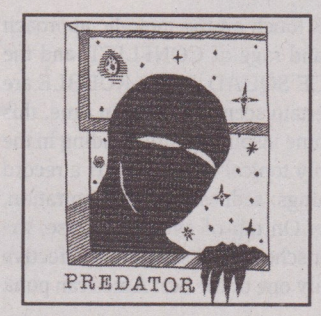
Now this is a true obscurity. A very short-lived punk band from Scandiano, Italy, NO JAP released one cassette in 1983, played a few gigs, and promptly disappeared, forgotten by all but a tiny handful of Italian punks and Italian punk fanatics. Well, one such fanatic has committed that tape to vinyl for the rest of us to enjoy in the 21st century. The packaging is unfortunately very sparse, with no liner notes to contextualize these sounds and just a handful of photos and an image of the original cassette inlay included on the back of the sleeve. On the upside, the sounds contained within are pretty fucking great! Very much UK influenced, bordering on Oi! at times, with some hot guitar leads and tons of gang vocals on the choruses. It sounds like CHRON GEN were a particularly strong influence along with perhaps ONE WAY SYSTEM, though the 1982 recording date precedes almost all the OWS records save the classic *No Entry* EP. There are flashes of the viciousness and chaos that characterize Italian hardcore as well, particularly in the drumming and some of the faster, more unhinged riffing. The drummer is clearly the hardcore kid of the band, hitting hard as hell and keeping things moving when the band lets the tempos flag a bit. The striking, synth-led "Kaos in the Place" that closes side A is a big surprise, a little slice of gritty goth rock until the gang vocals and guitar solos show up for the big fade-out. The band name is a little WTF, but the song titles and lyrics (many of which are in English) don't betray any kind of sketchy sentiments, so it's just a head-scratcher for the time being. Please write in if you know the story of this band and the name! (AU)
(Secret Service)

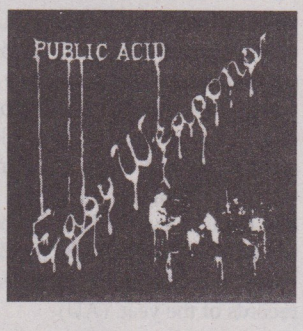
NUUREST SANKARIT – "Lassie Palaa Autoon" EP

Internet translation tells us this EP is called *Lassie Returns to the Car*, by NUISANCE HEROES. The cover art depicts the car on fire, with Lassie in it. Lassie shat on the bed again? Bad dog! So now you should









be as intrigued as I am. This is great, slightly tone-deaf singalong punk from Finland. For those that paid attention to the early Kick N' Punch catalog, SNIPERS is a good comparison. Four charming punkers and an Oi!-ish track to finish the job. I'm glad Finnish punks still send us their releases, otherwise I may never have heard this! (MA)
(Suppo Levyt / Woimasointu / Young Guns II)

OBNOX – "Bang Messiah" CD

OBNOX is motherfucking versatile. While this album has more loops and beats than I originally wanted, with heavy PARLIAMENT and a less sexy D'ANGELO influences, and not many straight rockers at all this time around, it does finish pretty strong. This is a hefty meld of several styles without sounding cheesy as hell. Fuzzy rock with plenty of funk and hip hop sensibility. A tip of the hat to some hair metal at times, but just a touch. This may not be the best OBNOX release yet, but it's all over the place taking pieces from whatever stands in the way, and it's pretty fierce. Get this. (DZ)
(Smog Veil)

ORANG ORANG – 12"

Stellar debut from Germany's ORANG ORANG, nine brutally honest hardcore blasts with crushing low end and piercing lead vocals that almost come across as bratty punk shits, which suits the exceptionally burly music *extremely* well. The breakdowns add as much nuance to the band as the vocals, and those clenched fist riffs serve as deadly build-ups to the warp speed steamroller that is their forté. I'll stop short of dropping the PV descriptor, but ORANG ORANG is worthy of some serious attention from fans of the subgenre. Excellent release. (WN)
(Contraszt!)

PHONE JERKS – "Bitchiker" LP

Goddamn, this thing is delivered with a sense of urgency that I find infectious. Imagine bands like the RIP OFFS and TEENGENERATE. Everything about this is intense: the pace, the vocals, the lyrics, the guitar, the drums, the bass...I said "everything," didn't I? Did I stutter? I can't wait to get my own copy. Excellent. (KK)
(Alien Snatch)

POISON HEART – "Heart of Black City" CD

Competent riff-based bar rock. The riffs are familiar and repetitive, and the songs are long, so it's a little bit of a slog. Multiple "Turbojugend Warsaw" logos on the CD. Good screaming slash yelling, bad singing slash emoting. Not nearly as anthemic as it would like to be. Well-produced. Very, very not weird. (MR)
(Heavy Medication)

PORVENIR OSCURO – "Noche De Maldad" EP

So many spiky punks claim to truly understand DISCHARGE and do so in purely aesthetic terms. You have bands who repeat the same riffs, the same vocal pacing, hell, even the same formatting of the imagery, but they do so without the heart or feeling. New York's PORVENIR OSCURO certainly stick to a D-beat style, for sure, but they do so in a way that is *all* heart and feeling, while also delivering sick, almost speed metal style riffs. Vocalist Sara also keep up the intensity, with a clear, rage-filled barking style that suits the music perfectly. I only wish I understood Spanish so I could catch the lyrics! Don't miss this one if you even moderately enjoy D-beat—it fucking slays. (JD)
(Always Restrictions)

PREDATOR – "No Face / White Plague"

As with most of the releases on Total Punk, PREDATOR throws out two quick but unforgettable garage-inspired punk songs that appear as if they were tailor made for this label. Total Punk seems to have a knack for producing tarnished gold, and this is no different. While "White Plague" is slightly slower, both songs are instantly catchy, tight as fuck and played with the kind of intensity you wish all bands would play with. (GH)
(Total Punk)

PUBLIC ACID – "Easy Weapons" LP

Ear blasting, fist banging hyper beat hardcore way with cymbals cutting out all over the high end and annoying the shit out of me while I'm trying to bang my face off. Vocals are straight *You Are The Victim*-era RAW POWER with a fury that is scary, and those guitars are buzzed to fuck just like they should be. There's still that cymbal distracting from the rest of the drums, but damn this record is too good for me to keep caring. Tight as hell, no bullshit hardcore punk. (WN)
(self-released)

PUPPY & THE HAND JOBS – "I Eat Abortions" EP

The final track on this five-song 7" is titled "Trash Rock-N-Roll," and that pretty much sums it up. These are lo-fi, up-tempo, fuzzed out garage rock songs that are trying real hard to be offensive. Unfortunately, people have been getting naked on stage for years, and singing about eating aborted fetuses somehow doesn't even count for shocking anymore. On the other hand, three dudes throwing the word "bitch" around and all of the song, "I Think I'm Gay" is actually offensive, so good job. (PA)
(Black Gladiator / Slovenly)

LOS REVOLUCIONARIOS – CD

Just as the cassette reviewed in this same issue packs a punch, this self titled disc is a total killer. Powerful and emotive crust / hardcore with TRAGEDY leads (with extra metal) and *soooo* many fucking riffs. I miss this kind of hardcore, and Mexico's LOS REVOLUCIONARIOS do it as well as anybody ever did. (WN)
(Unleashed Noise)

RUBBLE – LP

With a peace-punk head and a UK82 heart, RUBBLE pound out ten tracks of excellent punk on their first 12" offering, blowing away their already above average demo and EP. Helped along but an excellent recording that allows every instrument to shine (I can't get enough of the clean, rich bass tone) and led by Mare's clear and

powerful vocals and lyrics, RUBBLE touch on the melodic approach of RUBELLA BALLET, the power and rage of CONFLICT, and the street-level grit and punk drive of VICE SQUAD. While RUBBLE are clearly influenced by bands from a certain scene at a certain time, this doesn't sound dated at all, thanks to some inspired genre-bending in the songwriting and the incisive, incredibly topical lyrics. This is a record that will absolutely make you feel things: sadness, anger, inspiration, and perhaps even a little bit of hope. On top of everything else, the record's black, white, and purple color scheme and simple but effective cover art look effing great. This is easily one of the best American punk records of the year. (AU)
(Distort Reality)

RULER – "Jeanie Jeanie Jeanie / (It's Not) Saturday Night"

RULER, the latest from TEENGENERATE / FIRESTARTER's Fink, really shows their hand here by covering EDDIE COCHRAN's "Jeanie Jeanie Jeanie." Their take is more trashed out than the original, sure, but still very much in line with COCHRAN's version. To be perfectly frank, it strikes me as kinda cheesy. I vastly prefer the flip, a mid-tempo rocker with a singalong chorus and bubbling bassline. I think I'd like this one a lot more if the sides were reversed! (MF)
(Mangrove / Secret Mission)

SCARBORO – "Wolves on the Radio" CD

Fast, bouncy, well-produced punk for the Warped faction of this thing that many of us base our lives on. They utilize typical chord progressions and vocal inflections that might have you thinking of the OFFSPRING and BAD RELIGION. (GH)
(WTF)

SEWER TRENCH – "Optimism" LP

Grimy crust freaks, take note! Here's a stench grind ripper out of London that will knock your disgusting socks off! In the spirit DEVIATED INSTINCT, this shit is bleak and evil, like BOLT THROWER riddled with WARCOLLAPSE. This also features some well-placed, barbaric black metal parts that really push this one into the fire! Want to know what it's like to ride an overloaded garbage truck into the crusty depths of hell? Then this one's for you! (BA)
(A World We Never Made / Hecatombe / Insetu's Produções / Manaos Distro / Nuna / Rip Roaring Shit Storm / WOOAAARGH)

THE SHACKUPS – "Shack it Up" LP

Think Americana type stuff. No, no, not like folk punk or country punk (even though this is from Bloomington). More like straight up the BAND, or GRAM PARSONS inspired stuff with a singer that sounds like a cross between a crooning version of Ed From Ohio and maybe a tween Michael Stipe singing into a hairbrush microphone post bath. There's some worship of BILLY JOEL at his worst, and even though you can hear why Patrick Jennings (of HOT NEW MEXICANS fame) got involved in the recordings as there are some pretty killer vocal melodies, this isn't really punk or even rock at all. Your parents will be really pumped that you're finally playing some real music that isn't so nasty, so that's a plus! It's no secret that I'm a superfan of all the shit that they are pulling from, but it's not pulling me in at all. With a hefty twist, if this were darker, smarter, uglier, or angrier, this could be weird enough to fit right in between anything from that first NUISANCE record and BIG BILL on a mix tape with too many RANDY NEWMAN songs on it to impress any crush there ever was, and right up my alley. As it stands, this is a hard listen. (DZ)
(Let's Pretend)

THE SHIFTERS – "Have a Cunning Plan" LP

I have a feeling you might already own this?! This is a group I have heard about from numerous quarters prior to losing my mind to this here long player, and thus I am here to report that SHIFTERS capture that perfect *Fast Product* ideal without being punishing reenactment boredom... Basically, if you like to lose your mind to the early FIRE ENGINES and FALL 45s, then here's another thing to throw yourself at with vigor! They are able to *write songs*, some of which sound pensive and nervous and restrained, some of which sound like an anarchic celebration of that trebled out falling apart sound that swept Britain "It Was Easy It Was Cheap Go And Do It" etc etc. But I guess the same thing is happening in Australia right now what with SCHOOL DAMAGE, TERRY, PRIMO, and so forth... This is fucking great! Acerbic, hilarious, and wild. Get it or regret it! (LG)
(Trouble in Mind)

SLANDER TONGUE – "Server Room / This Time"

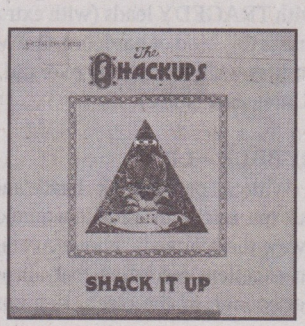
A punk'n'roll chunker about a server room?! What will they think of next? These Germans are in full-on assault mode with two summer 45 releases on Continental labels. Solid two-songer with some 21st century swagger. They do it so much better than most 'mericans. Killer full color jeans pocket sleeve to boot. (GB)
(Bachelor)

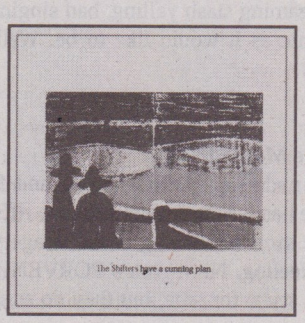
SMASH YOUR FACE - "9 Smokes Terror" CD

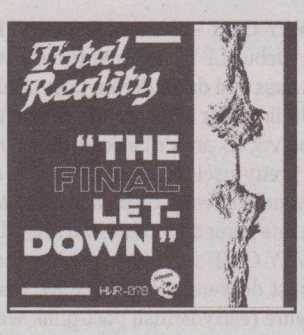
Good luck finding this one outside of Japan, but Tokyo's SMASH YOUR FACE make it very fucking clear on *9 Smokes Terror* that they are still a force to be reckoned with more than twenty years into their reign. Faster fastcore than all the young kids can muster, demented, fucked vocals as maniacal as any of the Japanese heavyweights, riffs for days and a mix that floats all over the spectrum over the course of this fourteen-minute disc. SMASH YOUR FACE hold your interest. They keep you guessing. You know you're going to get knocked on your ass, you just don't know how. A few years after I saw them for the first time in SF, I saw them support GAUZE in Tokyo. The vocalist glassed a heckler in the face with a full shōchū bottle. There was a lot of blood. Seventeen years later, that's what SMASH YOUR FACE still sounds like. (WN)
(Ride On)

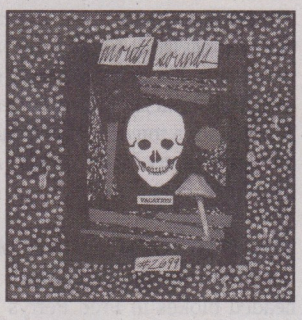
SOMERSET THROWER – "Godspeed" LP

On first listen I was ready to slate this band for being little more than FOO FIGHTERS wannabes. After a bit of time, the songs themselves have grown on me, while there is still an









overwhelming patina of alternative rock that makes it difficult to relate to this record in the context of *Maximum Rocknroll*. In their best moments, if I'm feeling generous, they bring to mind later JAWBREAKER, SUPERCHUNK, or maybe even SUGAR. (AM)
(Dead Broke)

SORE POINTS – LP

Dynamics is not the name of the game here when it comes to SORE POINTS, who only seem to know one speed and style, which is fine because it works for them. They hit you over the head with relentless 16th notes on the drums while playing RAMONES-style punk. They're probably also into '90s pop punk, but we're not supposed to talk about that anymore. Vocals inflections reminiscent of the DICKIES, but not anywhere near as annoying. The whole thing is over in a blur, which is how all good punk of this style should be. Drag it out and it dies. (GH)
(Deranged)

THE SRIRACHA-CHAS – "Treason" CD

I reviewed these guys' last CD and not much has changed. Older dudes playing mid-'80s-ish punk while keeping it simple and rough. I still can't say I love this, but I'm sure they have fun playing the local bar. (RL)
(Girth)

SWINGIN' UTTERS – "Peace and Love" LP

Long-time local boys mix it up here a bit. No, this isn't their "sell out" release, but they do branch out with some layered vocals in a pop way at times. A good deal of this consists of short angry rockers as we have come to expect, with not so much of the Celtic leanings of recent times. Johnny still handles the bulk of the lead vocals, but Darius brings some pop and Jack of TOY GUITAR / ONE MAN ARMY closes out the LP with a heartfelt tribute to a fallen local musician. I'm digging this. (RL)
(Fat Wreck)

TENEMENT RATS – "Crime Pays" EP

When I think of L.A., tenements and rats are not two things that come to mind. But it makes sense for L.A.'s TENEMENT RATS to be called that. Their chaotic but melodic sound seems like a strange synthesis of the ADOLESCENTS' "Kids of the Black Hole" and the RAMONES' "Warthog." It's messy, gross, and mysteriously also pretty competent. These tracks strike a totally excellent balance between pushing boundaries and staying super catchy. Totally recommended. (HB)
(No Front Teeth)

TEN HIGH – "Slackjaw Gaze / No Waves"

Relatively controlled garage psych from Arkansas's TEN HIGH, the kind of thing that would fit very comfortably in a Goner or Slovenly distro. TEN HIGH have been greasier than this in the past, but perhaps since this is a single they're focusing on songs, not jams, which, in context, is probably a good move. From a songwriting perspective at least, side A brings the goods for sure. As far as the sounds go, the male / female vocals are delivered just right, and the guitar licks never get so toasty that they're in the way. MONOSHOCK obsessives will need to dig deeper into TEN HIGH's discography to get a deep psych fix, but the rest of us will be plenty pleased flipping this one over and over. Pro tip: When fact-checking a review, sometimes it's fun to use a band's Facebook page as a source because they say things like, "Artists We Also Like: nuge" and you're like, "Dang, I hope that's not true," and then they also say things like, "General Manager: Satan" and you're like, "Dang, I hope that *is* true" and by then you've hopefully confirmed that "Fayetteville" is indeed spelled F-A-Y-E-T-T-E-V-I-L-L-E. (MR)
(What's for Breakfast)

TOMMY AND THE COMMIES – "Here Come" LP

Kind of odd a band can both want to and then painstakingly capture, what, the third or fourth album by the JAM? Fuck, I really can't remember anymore if this is the perfect PAUL WELLER, or if I'm just recalling some other B-grade 1981 UK mod power pop singer I can't place. Is it the RIVALS?! The WASPS?! Fuck. Maybe it's just ol' ADAM ANT. Anyway, every fucking song on here is like a long-lost 1980 outtake, and on the better fast-paced, anthemic side of "mod" rather than the saccharine studio mod shite that mostly belongs in a bin. Very fucking good. (GB)
(Slovenly)

TOTAL REALITY – "The Final Let-Down" EP

Straightforward straightedge hardcore punk from Germany with plenty of room to mosh. It reminds me a lot of Kansas City's BLINDSIDE USA in terms of riffs and production. You can hear some classic NYHC influence as well—a divebomb and AGNOSTIC FRONT-type solo here and there. The lyrics are...out there. Props to them for singing in English (I doubt I could write a coherent song in a language that's foreign to me), but I'm not really sure what they are talking about. Here are some stand-out lines: *"Your demeanor, such a wiener," "You made it into this song but don't get me wrong / you live up your own ass and we are done with this farce."* (AJ)
(Hardware)

LA TRINIDAD – "Las Venas / Ay, Tus Ojos"

Super catchy, poppy garage rock outta Spain. The standout element here is easily the lyrics, which go well beyond your typical garage rock fare; they even provide English translations for non-Spanish speakers! I did not expect the titular eyes of "Ay, Tus Ojos" to be compared to "constellations of salt" and "black glass roses." Pretty neat stuff! (MF)
(Spazz)

TUHOON TUOMITUT – "Krustilokki" EP

Finland's TUHOON TUOMITUT offer up six tracks of vicious crust led by a pair of amazing and amazingly pissed female vocalists. The vocals are a definite highlight; their intricate trade-offs and gang vocals are a defining characteristic of the band. They make good use of their two-guitar lineup as well, not so much dividing duties into lead and rhythm as exploring two divergent but complementary riffs or melodic lines knowing that the rhythm section will hold things together. Musically this is everything good about Minneapolis circa '95, recalling masters

like MISERY, ASSRASH and especially STATE OF FEAR. Driving, not terribly heavily distorted and heavy on the classic string-bending Scandi-style leads. The lyrics are killer even in translation, heavy on the sarcasm and biting criticism of fake allies within the scene and the world without. There's not a ton of modern crust I'd go out of my way to recommend, but this is pretty fuckin' great. (AU)
(Nuclear Chaos)

THE UNCOUTH – "Just a Matter of Time / All You Fascists"

I'm not the first to make a snap judgment about a group of crop-headed blokes in Fred Perrys and Docs, even though I should know better by now. Expecting to drop the needle on some proper skinhead Oi!, I was pleasantly blown away to be treated to a high-voltage rock'n'roll stomper with all the energy of MOTÖRHEAD. The UNCOUTH nail their political colors to the mast on the flip, with a rollicking pub-rock cover of WOODY GUTHRIE's "All You Fascists Bound to Lose" (replete with bar-room piano) that sounds like Decca-era COCK SPARRER. Shame there are only two songs here. (AM)
(Teenage Heart)

UNHOLY TWO – "The Pleasure to End All Pleasures" LP

Columbus, Ohio's UNHOLY TWO have dropped a massive, plodding, noisy as fuck record to be consumed by your ears. Layers and layers of noise and guitars swirl around as a heavily affected vocal track howls over the din and throbbing drums. They sound like they take some inspiration from GODFLESH, MY BLOODY VALENTINE demos and maybe even SPACEMEN 3, although somewhat darker. At one point, the band directly lifts the riff from "Black Sabbath" and melds it into their own noise rock creation. You'll probably enjoy this more if you're high as fuck, but it's not required. (GH)
(12XU)

VACATION – "Mouth Sounds #2699" LP

Coming in hot with a surf-style string bend and a jangly tambourine, the opening of this record explodes into a tidal wave of MARKED MEN-style pop punk. The sound is perfectly gritty and punk, a little anthemic, and slightly experimental in unexpected ways. Centering vocals compressed so hard they sound like they're coming in through a mostly broken payphone, the tenderest track, "My Fake Life," occupies an intensely heartfelt zone shared with bands like CARRIE NATIONS and SHELLSHAG. The tracks are a little all over the place, channelling influences as disparate as GUIDED BY VOICES and WEEZER, but definitely full of bangers all the way through. (HB)
(Let's Pretend)

VIOLENCE CREEPS –"Nephew Melting / Ford Go Bikes"

Loud and aggressive and somewhat unnerving. The vocals are delivered with a real sense of anger. The music is sort of herky-jerky, with something of an electronic feel. Kind of reminds me of FLIPPER and TSOL. I like it. (KK)
(Total Punk)

WAY OUT – "Arc of Descent" LP

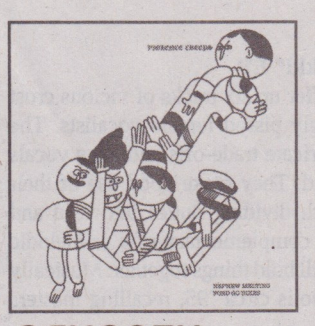
Debut LP from Providence's WAY OUT. Like their 2015 demo, this is bass and drum driven post-punk with echo guitar and clipped vocals. Unlike their 2015 demo, the songs here don't always hit sharply and the vocals aren't back-of-the-room distant. I know JOY DIVISION is a pretty useless comparison for a band, because 1,000,000 bands, all sounding pretty disparate, have all been compared to JOY DIVISION at one point or another, but regardless, it's worth noting that on occasion WAY OUT's singer *really* hits Ian Curtis's vocals at their chirpiest and most desperate. It's uncanny, really. This record doesn't transcend its genre (early British post-punk worship), but it does set itself apart, to a degree, by having catchier vocal melodies and guitar lines that can keep up with the bass. Unflinchingly solid. (MR)
(Atomic Action)

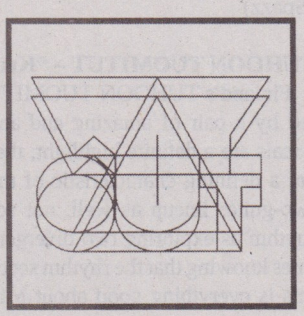
WOOD CHICKENS – "Mall Cop / Eat the Leech"

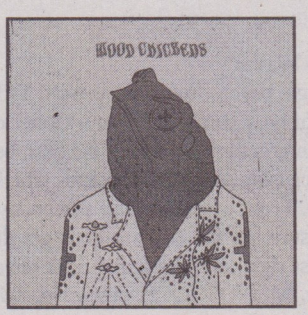
Imagine a red-eyed toad in a Nudie jacket emblazoned with fried eggs and pot leafs. These Madison, Wisconsin guys are definitely fried, one side with psycho-delic effects and the stellar B-side just bashing it out Midwest style. (GB)
(Head Above Water)

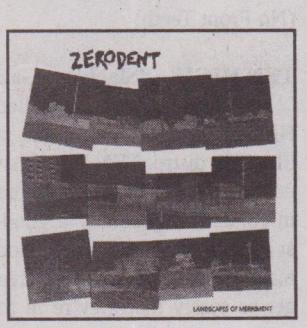
ZERODENT – "Landscapes of Merriment" LP

Double the pleasure with ZERODENT's second LP. Perth's most remote punks channel some canonical punk sounds here (and always), taking a fairly cold post-punk approach up front, but heating things a bit with an early '80s UK punk bite. A very measured offering, but it's got enough brains to catapult it past mere case study. Less than 300 copies worldwide, so move quickly and with purpose. (MC)
(Alien Snatch)









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(GH) Greg Harvester
(JR) Jason Ryan
(MA) Matt Badenhop
(RS) Ramy Silyan
(TB) Tyler Birch
(WN) Robert Collins

ARSEHOLES – *Nevermind the ***** Here's the...* – ARSEHOLES, as in "Game of the," though these guys are firmly SHITLICKERS worship. Nothing new here, but if you haven't been D-beat to death yet this one's not gonna disappoint. (MA) (6-song cassette, lyrics not included, sickheadrecs.storeny.com)

THE BANANAS / RIVERSEDGE – For a certain sub-sect of the punk community, putting on any BANANAS release is like separating yourself from a nightmare world with your favorite blanket. It's a balm and a miracle cure. I'm not saying that they shy away from the tough topics. They meet them head on and acknowledge that everything is completely, utterly fucked and we were all doomed before any of us were even sentient beings...but it'll be all right...maybe...for a little while, anyway, if we're lucky. They've been a band for well over 25 years, and these two new songs feel triumphant and essential to their catalog, which is no small feat. What do they sound like? They sound like the BANANAS. Chattanooga's RIVERSEDGE is a relatively new band, but they collectively have just as many (if not more) years of DIY life under their belts as the BANANAS. For some, the ill-defined moniker of "region rock" might seem an apt description for them, but they have honed and calculated their melodic attack through many bands. Often, songs on splits feel like throwaways, but these two are just as essential as anything the band has released so far. The first one feels emotional and dynamic while the second one hits you over the head with raw energy. Both complement each other perfectly. It also doesn't hurt that they're one of the best live bands I've seen this year. A perfect split tape. (GH) (4-song cassette, lyrics not included, Lifer Tapes, 2201 Kirby Ave, Chattanooga, TN 37404 lifertapes@gmail.com)

BIG KITTY – *A Legend in the Field of Entertainment* – Over the past eighteen years, this Tennessee wildman has been crafting his freaky music through a mixture of old-time, carnie-style showmanship, DIY, intense sincerity, and fearless vulnerability. BIG KITTY's music is difficult to explain, but will appeal to fans of outsider music and weird freaks of all stripes. If this says anything, at a live show, I've seen members of the same crowd stare dumbfounded, laugh like maniacs, appear completely annoyed, and bawl from sadness. This music produces emotions...the exact emotion depends on your outlook. (GH) (10-song cassette, lyrics not included, Let's Pretend Records, PO Box 1663, Bloomington, IN 47402 letspretendrecords.com)

BUBBLE BOYS – *Sticky Sitch* – Orlando's BUBBLE BOYS play a fun, upbeat version of that lo-fi surfy garage rock that was unavoidable in the early 2010s. I couldn't stop recalling TY SEGALL vocal melodies and studio tricks while listening to this, but surprisingly I never got bored. BUBBLE BOYS does a well-executed rendition of this sound, brings good vibes the whole listen, and rarely feels contrived or plagiarized like most of the bands still waving this flag. Personally, I've seen enough Fender amps for a lifetime, but I'm sure if you're not on the West Coast you could have a lot of fun at a sweaty house show BUBBLE BOYS is playing at. Originality is overrated, this is quality stuff. (TB) (8-song cassette, lyrics not included, bubbleboys.bandcamp.com)

THE CLASSMATES – *Between The Lines* – Up tempo Italian power punk (that's a new genre I just made up for power pop bands that really aren't as poppy as power pop bands—you're welcome) with a XS ENERGY / WHITE HEAT vibe and a knack for crafting addictive tracks. It's a killer, and it's worth noting that this is a "proper" LP release on Area Pirata, but they decided to send in a promo CD-R for review...so they get reviewed with the CD-Rs. I don't make the rules, kids, but you should probably send us the fuckin' records. (WN) (10-song CD-R, lyrics not included, areapirata.com)

CYBER BULLIES – *Leather and Lazers* – The cover art is four dudes past 30 in leather jackets with neon glasses and lasers by way of green screen, and I doubt they are young enough to have experienced cyberbullying, so I figured this would be interesting. But I guess you ignore the band name because the song titles were all '80s references, like "Gorbachev Was Right" and one was the date of Reagan's assassination attempt. Sadly, there are no lyrics included to delve deeper into this uncle-humor, but the music is also lots of fun. Five minutes of snotty synth-punk that reminds me of the whole CONEHEADS movement, except with JELLO BIAFRA vocals and dorky lyrics. (TB) (5-song cassette, lyrics not included, morepowertapes.bandcamp.com)

EXCREMENT OF WAR – *Cathode Ray Coma* – Oh, anyone who has seen my hooded sweatshirt knows I love EXCREMENT OF WAR. Of course I am joking in the corniest way possible, but this was definitely an exciting and surprising reissue to see come through. *Cathode Ray Coma* (originally released in 1994) starts off with a few minutes of instrumental as most crust bands did in the '90s. Full-up slightly sloppy E.N.T. / HELLKRUSHER style right into "Exist Enslave." So if you like DOOM with a bit more arrangement, keep reading. Damn, Mags had one of the most ferocious, vitriol hissing, raspiest vocal tones ever. Ripping. The EOW split with DEFORMED CONSCIENCE might be my favorite of their material as the UK / US matchup compliments each other so well, but if you can get a hand on this (or either recording for that matter) you will not be disappointed. (JR) (14-song cassette, lyrics included, blacxkonflik.storenvy.com)

FIRE BAD! – *Monster Lock & Loll* – Dangerously good lo-fi garage horror synth punk. Sometimes you only need a few words. (WN) (10-song CD-R, lyrics not included, firebad1.bandcamp.com)

FLASH HOUSE – *Brown Sauce* – The

included mini-bio paints a picture of a band that was slapped together as a half-hearted joke so a bunch of super fans could get opening slots with their favorite acts...and then decided to keep playing. But the reality is that this disc paints a legit picture of budding butt rock royalty. Shades of prime era TURBONEGRO, a touch of *Feel the Darkness* and some of the fire that make the first NASHVILLE PUSSY singles absolute classics. Sold. (WN) (8-song CD-R, lyrics not included, godscandyrecords.com)

FRENTE NORTE – *Demo 2* – In a dark green sleeve, here is the follow up to FRENTE NORTE's *Demo 1* in a light blue sleeve. I can appreciate their deliberate design composition and drawing style. Now the music: three songs of pogo-surging Latino swagger. Sung in Spanish, this tape brims with happiness and no fucks given attitude. Simple and talented. It's messy, it's psychedelic, it's punk! I like you guys! I know you don't care, but would be damn cool about it anyway and move right along with independent prosperity. Cheers! Glad to have both of these tapes. *"Every day I leave my house, I don't know what's going to happen / I throw myself out on the street and tell myself, I hope I survive."* (JR) (3-song cassette, lyrics included, frentenorte.bandcamp.com)

GENOGEIST – Vicious, filthy metallic crust from Portland. Gasping guttural vocals smother within digital static raw noise. Think *Digital Evil In Your Life*-era SDS. Down-tuned breaks that flow into diminutive neanderthal crust bangers. A disgusting and chaotic sounding demonstration of feral inspired compositions. Members of DESPAIR, FILTHCHAIN, DODLADGE, VASTATION, etc. have put together a lengthy demo that stands out with unique aggression. The mix brings certain aspects to the front at all the right times, while retaining its wild and cyber-tinged nature. Definitely on fire, compared to many charred metallic offerings of a similar style. (JR) (5-song cassette, lyrics not included, blacxkonflik.storenvy.com)

GOD'S AMERICA – *The Undeserving Cassette* – The time I spend with grind and powerviolence is mostly limited to when I'm reviewing tapes, so you're not gonna get any boring comparisons here. I'm satisfied by GOD'S AMERICA's drumming alone. All the familiar stylistic elements of the genera are here, with some added dizzying change-ups to interrupt your usual blastbeat finger shake, and vokills of the nastiest caliber. (MA) (14-song cassette, lyrics not included, godsamerica.bandcamp.com)

DYON MCCRATNEY – *Blood Carpet* – This is a solo tape from one of the members of Cincinnati's VACATION, but it sounds nothing like them, really. Dylan explores synth and anxious rhythms throughout the ten songs on this tape, sometimes recalling early minimal Midwestern punk like the DANCING CIGARETTES and AMOEBAS IN CHAOS, but not sounding at all like a throwback attempt. Other times, it sounds like *Faith*-era CURE. These two worlds collide to create an overall solid release. I can't get enough of it. (GH) (10-song cassette, no lyrics included, letspretendrecords.com)

NIDSTANG – *Angstloch* – I knew this sounded familiar; I reviewed the first NISTANG tape about a year ago. This is rough and tumbling maniacal black metal from Olympia, Washington. Vocals are tortuous and disturbed. Songs blast away for a bit, then grind back together with punk riffs, some downright catchy. I'm going to say this is decidedly more in the noise punk chamber with thick inspiration from primitive whirling psychotic black metal. As a solo project, this stands on eight legs. What that arachnid beast looks like is entirely up to your imagination. NIDSTANG wield an eldritch horrifying place and time, much like the real world. (JR) (11-song cassette, no lyrics included, nidstang.bandcamp.com)

NO RIGHT – *Unjustified* – This is the metallic hardcore I grew up with, and is what drew me to heavy music. I love this signature brand of heavy. Chaotic, yet articulate XXX hardcore from the Bay. Honestly, this is a breath of fresh air. Heavy, technical breakdowns, two-steps, amazing guitar tone, and the singer kills it. Taking me back to seeing SEVEN GENERATIONS, TIME FOR CHANGE, GATHER, or RUN WITH THE HUNTED, with lots of the SWARM and RACETRAITOR influences thrown in. The lyrics are just as heavy, if not heavier than the music. Songs about personal growth, loss of friendship, and abusive relationships. If you miss '90s metallic hardcore, this tape is for you. (RS) (6-song cassette, lyrics not included, norightxxx.bandcamp.com)

PROTRUDERS – *Protrudersredurtorp* – Rock'n'roll punk that is very noisy. This tape is really blown out, and I don't know if all their releases sound like this, but it's not doing them any favors. I am not really feeling this band's sound...maybe the layer of fuzz doesn't always exist atop their music, but it makes them sound so claustrophobic. At times it sounds like the BUZZCOCKS with synth noise parts in between...meh. Fun tape to have in my collection, but overall I kinda get the "artsy try hard" vibe. (RS) (6-song cassette, lyrics not included, protruder.bandcamp.com)

PSYCHIC JUDGE – *Psycho-Path to Enlightenment* – This is the second tape from this underappreciated New York punk band, and it rules! Two guitars play against each other...one playing rhythm while the other constantly rips noodly leads that fit well into the song rather than distract. The bass and drums are booming and hold shit down while the vocals sing about broken hearts and awful shit, yet remain triumphant...like a rose rising out of the garbage dump of this world. Excellence! (GH) (4-song cassette, lyrics included, psychicjudge.bandcamp.com)

PUSSYFOOTER – Quick, snotty, fast, and in your face punk from McAllen, Texas! This demo by no means reinvents hardcore punk, but it disrupts the narrative we have all been force fed since the '80s, and I can back that. Definitely falling in line with the 1-2-1-2 trend in hardcore right now, but I am not complaining. I love it. I think a healthy amount of pogo is important in the pit. Anyways, this demo rocks. Songs about being sex-posi, anxiety, and a big fuck you to parasitic people. (RS) (7-song cassette, lyrics included, somosportodoslados@gmail.com)

LOS REVOLUCIONARIOS – *Truman Show* – Fuckin' excellent anthemic neocrust from Mexico. Dueling high / low vocals, tonnage for days, and a low end chug that puts LOS REVOLUCIONARIOS in league with the heavyweights. Truman Show was released last year, but fans of (newer) WOLFBRIGADE, EKKAIA and the like should get on this train immediately. (WN) (9-song cassette, lyrics included, losrevolucionarios.bandcamp.com)

SACRED COWS – *Skullduggery* – What if SOCKEYE were a psychedelic grunge band? Because SACRED COWS are just as stupid (that's a compliment) and notably more aggressive, more dirty, and more out there. Irreverent, obnoxious, intelligent mutant punk with a powerful low end and seemingly limitless access to weird samples. Yeah...it's good, and it's worth the hunt. (WN) (10-song CD-R, no contact info)

SANCTION A – *8 Songs* – So-Cal style hardcore punk by way of Quebec, Canada. *8 Songs* is incredibly driving, with very clean trebly guitars. Signature Southern California hardcore snotty shout / yelled vocals. Reminds me a lot *Dance With Me* era TSOL, the ADOLESCENTS, and AGENT ORANGE. It is just aggressive enough, with lots of melody. This tape is a great find! Pick it up if you can. (RS) (8-song cassette, lyrics included, sanctiona.bandcamp.com)

SCARECROW – The sound of ruthless desperation, SCARECROW plays intense

hardcore punk with a vocal sound of INITIAL STATE and music laid like NYHC bricks. Song after song, there are obvious Swedish and Finnish hardcore influences. Loose strings and punctuated drums gallop throughout, definitely a band to keep an eye out for. (JR) (5-song cassette, lyrics included, bunkerpunks.bandcamp.com)

7MAGZ – *El Imperio Esta Destinado a Caer* – Usually when people say a project is all over the place it's a bad thing, but that's mainly what kept me listening to this. The guitar and vocals stay loud, but you're getting punk, metal, blues, rock riffs, and arguably everything else. You can appreciate that a lot of effort went into these recordings, and admittedly I flipped the tape. But since this was first released in 2003, I'm fine with saying that nothing will bring me back for another listen. (TB) (25-song cassette, lyrics included, revolutiondiscos.bandcamp.com)

SLUSH – *Frog Water* – Man, this one's truly confounding and all over the place. Garage punk, wacky attempts at hardcore, a bit of psych rock, PRIMUS (for fuck's sake), NOMEANSNO, and a fair amount of what I like to call "fucking around," which refers to general wackiness or simply "jamming." It sounds like a compilation of eleven different bands, and that's not an exaggeration. A bit too self-indulgent to play through again, but some appealing moments. (MA) (11-song cassette, lyrics not included, slushband.bandcamp.com)

THE TEENAGE ZITS – *Turn It Up* – When I listen to shit-fi garage punk, I'm not looking to feel depressed and angry about child sexual abuse. But that is how I ended up feeling when I listened to "Honey, I Raped The Kids," which contains the lines *"I was playing with my ray gun / Not sorry for what I done / Honey, I raped the kids."* It sucks to hear such a real, fucked up thing to be talked about like this. It sucks more that this was recorded eighteen years ago, and instead of spending that time growing and learning from mistakes, these people are making a reissue. (TB) (12-song CD-R, lyrics included, easternprawn.com)

THERAPY – *Demo 2018* – Heavy modern crust from San Diego with a shrill, death metallish singer. Reminds me of FROM ASHES RISE, but more loose and less frantic. Crushing but not enough to break any new ground. Not to be confused with THERAPY? (MA) (6-song cassette, lyrics not included, therapysd.bandcamp.com)

WILD WINGS – *Showbizzz* – Fuzzed out guitar driven and mutilated rock'n'roll, elements of early MUDHONEY and other bands that came of age while punk was still the jam, but people were starting to figure out that filthy '70s rock was pretty damned good. And also elements of drug addled filthy '70s rock. For what it's worth, the ten-minute-plus freeform "Failed Design For Living" might be the disc's highlight. Way into it. (WN) (7-song CD-R, lyrics not included, lionscarerecordings.com)

WOOD CHICKENS – *Wood Chickens Must Die* – I honestly picked this tape up because I saw the song title "We Skate in Boots" and I'm with it—people trip too hard about footwear they skate in. Supposedly this is cow punk, but likely only because they are from Wisconsin, because what we have here is four minutes of tough, straight up hardcore punk. The best type of band: it's reaching the edge of falling apart, but it keeps driving forward fast and nasty. They have moments where they throw in a weird guitar thing or a shrill vocal screech, and I wish there were a lot more of that, and more songs in general! I've only lived in the Bay Area, so I can't exactly connect with the farm imagery, but this is still a band I'm keeping my eye on. (TB) (4-song cassette, lyrics not included, woodchickens@yahoo.com)

V/A – *O Som Do Abismo Vol.01: A Fucking Raw Brazilian Underground Compilation* – We can kinda let the title speak for itself here, right? 57 monster tracks from SINDROME DO ÓDIO, BESTIAL FUCKER, NUCLEAR FRÖST, FINAL TRÁGICO, SVARTFÅGLARS BEGRAVNING, and sixteen others. Quality level is exceptionally high on this one, from the raw D-beat to the brutal punk to the plain old hardcore...it might be a bit of a pain to track down, but this comp is highly recommended. (WN) (57-song CD-R, lyrics not included, c/o Discordia Records, no contact info)

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(NR) Nimmy Ramona
(RH) Ryan Hertel
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CELLULOID LUNCH #1
$5 / 36 pgs
Bare bones but rad interview zine here. When I say "bare bones," I mean in basically every aspect: the zine consists solely of four typewritten interviews (Eddie Flowers, Lucy Niles, Rick Trembles, Lia Lepre), each accompanied by some pictures. Nothing else. It's a super simple cut and paste layout; there are even a few blank pages here. Two of the four interviews jump right in without so much as mentioning who the subject is; I had to check the initials on the response against the people listed on the cover to determine who was being interviewed. No context, no contact information, nothing. But the interviews are some of the most compelling I've read in a long, long time. It's clear that whoever put this zine together really cares about the questions they're asking, and the interviewees give responses just as thoughtful as the questions. In an era when so many seem so much more concerned with form than with content, it's quite refreshing to read a zine with the opposite priorities. (MF)

COOL HISS #8: A VIRGINA PUNK HISTORY 1977-86 VOLUME 1
$8 / 56 pgs
What the title says, and great job fulfilling the mission, too. Full-sized zine that incorporates reprints of original fliers, interviews and news articles from wide array of sources with more contemporary reflections from show goers, bands, and club owners. Beex, L'amour, White Cross, Ortho-tonics, Waltons, Death Piggy, Honor Role, Megadosage, Sarcastic Assholes, Landlords, Happy Flowers, Front Line, and Gwar all get coverage (if your lesser known favorite is missing—odds are they at least get mentioned, as there is a substantial breakdown of how bands evolved into each other in some of the interviews). The zine starts out with reprints of the kind of local articles on the Ramones, Iggy Pop, and the "new wave" in general that were probably lots of people's first exposure to punk but have disappeared from memory / to landfills. I assume most of this stuff not from obvious sources was written for free weeklies and college newspapers by people who were in or just a step away from the action. Articles that will seem familiar to most punks about local clubs getting closed down, flier posting being targeted by police, and young bands lamenting the state of venues abound. Nice, clean cut and paste layout that fills to the brim with fliers, old ads and photos making it a more than worthwhile perusal for punk inspiration. Even if the bands mentioned above or this scene isn't your jam, I'd check this out if you're into old USHC history. The reprint of the article about local VA reaction to the Bad Brains / Big Boys rift was of particular interest to me because it expanded on what we already know from history and hearsay but provides a concrete examples of how local punks (not the ones that end up as talking heads in every doc) reacted. Brian / Cool Hiss did a great job of digging through the trenches and consolidating the info. (JA)
2227 Venable St. Richmond VA 23223 / bebaynes@gmail.com

CURRENT MOOD: SAD
$2 / 20 pgs
Maira's latest is a series of entries from their LiveJournal, written over a three year period and chronicling a rough period of their life during which they had undiagnosed bipolar disorder. Each entry is an illustrated snapshot of their state of mind that day. Read together, they give a sense of the ebb and flow of emotions and hope for stability. If you like reading people's old LiveJournals, you could be into this one. Content warning for self-harm and mental illness. (NR)
neonclear@gmail.com

PIT BOSS
16 pgs
This mini comic is a collection of bills from a diner and one-page comics to match them featuring angry, sometimes scary guests and diner workers. The less sense you expect it to make, the more fun you will have with each page. Each comic is done in a different style, but the manic energy is constant throughout. It can definitely add to the pile you have of "weird zines you use to distract your friend for a minute or so in order to get them to shut up and allow yourself to get a task completed." Everyone has one of those, right? (RH)

PITBOSS #2
20 pgs
Not only will I have spent more time crafting this review for the zine than was actually put into crafting the zine itself, but in the time it takes you to read this review, you could easily pound through this lil peeper. This appears to be a compilation of doodles on both sides of guest checks from disgruntled, yet pretty jolly fucking kitchen workers. I won't lie, despite my clowning on the simplicity of this tiny ass tome, there are a couple good jabs in here. Sharpie and ballpoint one page comics literally stained with the line cook's sweat and / or dish hog's spray nozzle. It's sporadic. It's sparse. It's minuscule. It goes nowhere. It's cool, though. This could easily be incredibly brain dead or childish, with a bunch of boners and shitty horns drawn on photos of the boss, but it's not. I can't officially endorse this one yet, but I can totally see the editors getting their shit together and making this a pretty decent read one day. Good luck finding this. (DZ)

RAZORCAKE #106
$4 / 114 pgs
This is the Punks and Mental Health issue, and it aims to "destigmatize mental health, help people get more comfortable talking about it, and dissolve the shame many feel when we know there's something wrong us." There's an essay pondering what a neurotypical person can or should do to support their friends who struggle with mental illness.

Also included are personal accounts and interviews with punks living with mental illness and its impact on their lives. There are also the regular columnists and reviews along with comics by MariNaomi, Ben Snakepit, and others. A solid read. (NR)
PO Box 42129, Los Angleles, CA, 90042

SHADOW #1
$3 / 24 pgs
"Maybe when you read this you will realize that you never knew me." *Shadow* zine is filled with diary-like prose such as this, its writer revealing her most personal thoughts in a medium where she can "be raw and open and not give a fuck what anybody else thinks." Reading *Shadow*, it almost feels like it should be bound by a pink puffy cover secured with a delicate brass lock. Instead, its pages are tucked between black construction paper that shimmers, thanks to a silver, iridescent crescent moon above which is the word, also in silver, "Shadow." These 24 pages teem with black-and-white drawings of roses, a bed with feet sticking out, smiley faces, and other illustrations that serve as background to musings like: "It is difficult living in a sea of unwantedness." *Shadow* is ideal if you wish to revel in a precious kind of melancholy. (GM)
zineshadow@gmail.com

SLUT CITY JOURNAL #2
$2 / 100 pgs
Despite what you may think, *Slut City Journal* has little do with sex; its name instead can rather be broken down as Salt Lake UT. See what I'm saying? This zine is created by a collective in Salt Lake City with the intention of growing the DIY scene in the city and by enriching DIY culture in general. As such, there is a bit of optimism here as well as language and guides written for people who are newly interested in the broader world DIY. Some of these are for beginners, such as wheatpasting and making flyers, starting a distro, and making vegan food. There are guides for more complex endeavors included, such as making hard apple cider, booking and promoting shows, creating and operating a short range pirate TV station, and living without a state-issued ID. Each of these guides is relatively thorough in detail (the section on booking shows is a tenth of this zine) and written in a language that is approachable. Combined with some of the more editorial sections of this zine, such as the short critiques of consumer capitalism and the ads, I could see this zine being useful to middle school or high school punks thirsty for something outside of mainstream culture. Hopefully they can use the other resources listed inside, such as the very brief zine and distro directory, to learn even more about DIY efforts throughout the world. And hey, if you're interested, this zine is down to do trades. (JD)
Punks And Rogues, 369 East 900 South #326, Salt Lake City, UT 84111

TRUST #191
€3 / 66 pgs
It's probably not unfair to call *Trust* "the German equivalent to *MRR*." Though my German reading comprehension is fairly low, I still enjoy each issue that I get. The sleek, black and white format make it an easy magazine to spend a few minutes with and flip through the glossy pictures and band interviews. I also tend to enjoy reading the record reviews in international publications. Check out this issue for interviews with German punkers Es War Mord and La Vase. (RH)
Trust Postfach 11 07 62, 28087 Bremen, GERMANY / trust-zine.de

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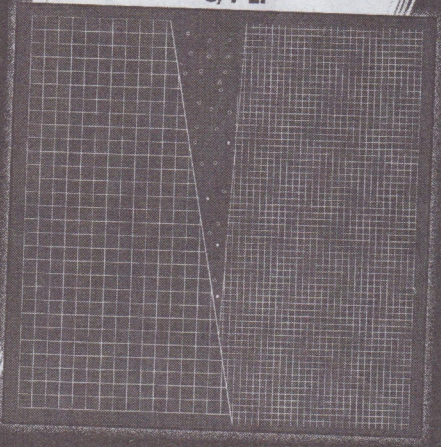

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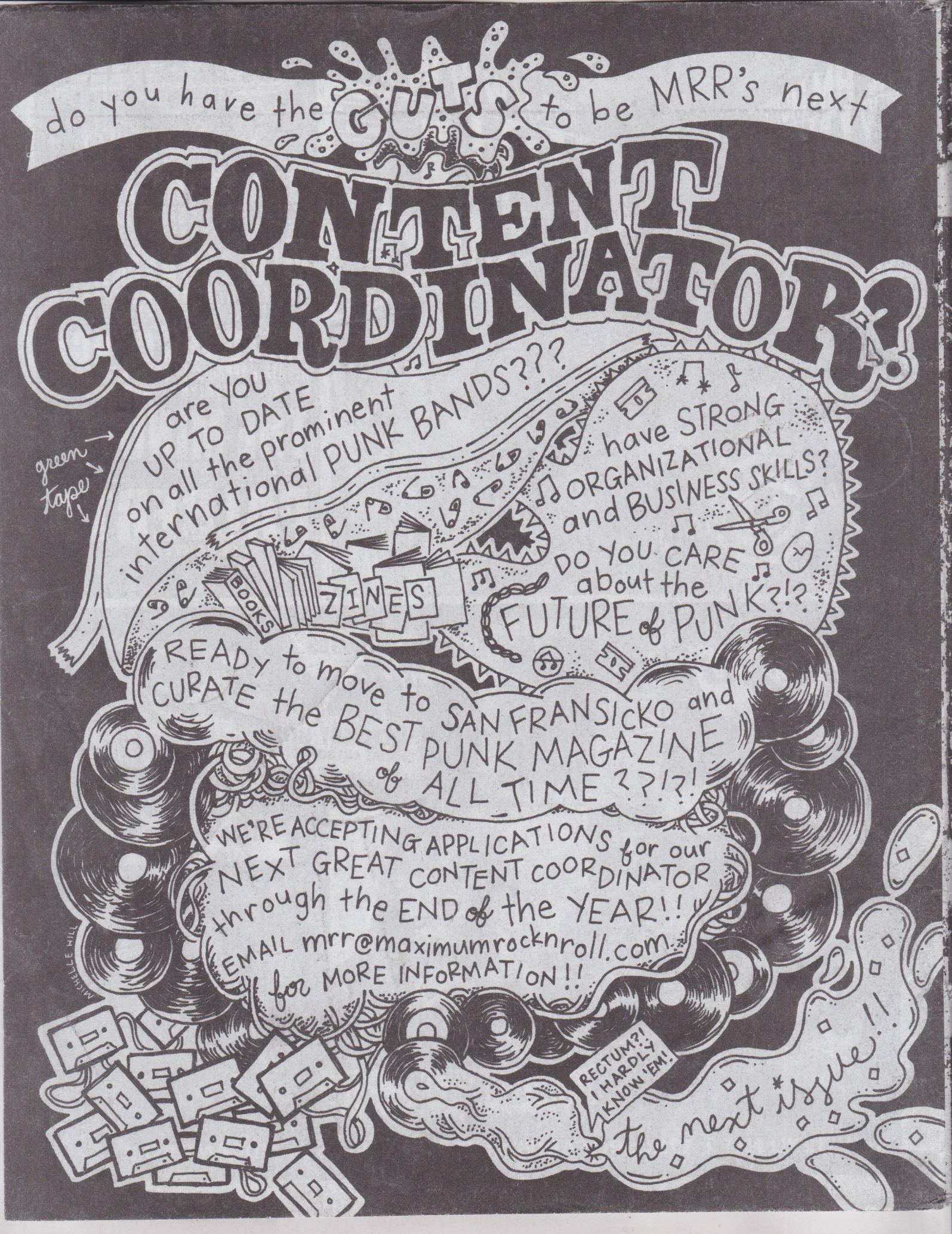
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